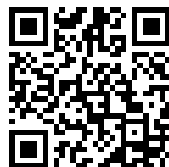
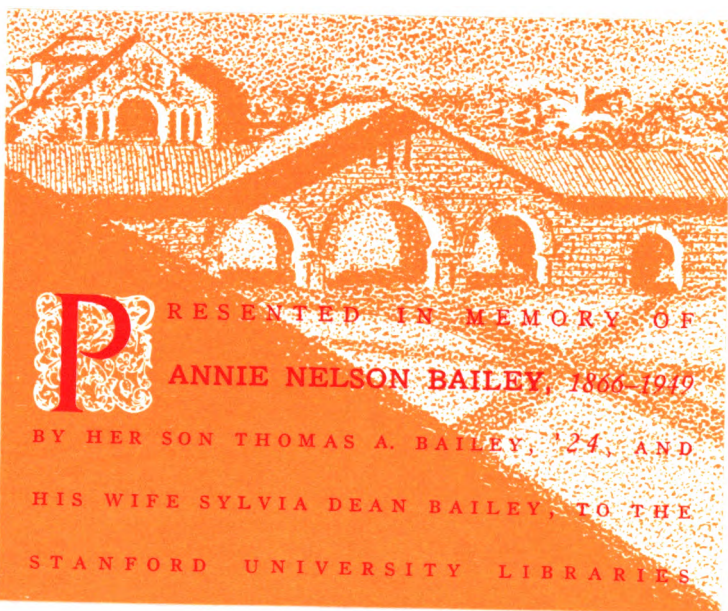

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**SUNSHINE AND SHADOW
OF
SLAVE LIFE.**

**AMS PRESS
NEW YORK**

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW OF SLAVE LIFE.



Reminiscences As Told By Isaac D. Williams
To
“Tege.”

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PREFACE.

There are few persons living in the city of East Saginaw, or even in the Saginaw Valley, who have not seen or heard of Isaac D. Williams, or "Uncle Ike" as he is more familiarly known. With most people he is a favorite on account of his cheerful disposition and obliging ways. He has a wonderful memory and having lived in the midst of many exciting events of our national history, tells numerous stories of his experience while a slave in the South, and some of these stories are intensely interesting.

In these reminiscences the author takes the liberty of writing in the first person, and instead of adopting any peculiar phraseology or dialect, gives them in plain English. He has had long conversations with the old man, and from copious notes taken at different times, gives the most important events in his career.

Uncle Ike generally uses choice language and expresses himself in a very good manner. There is a vein of originality about him, and, although he can neither read nor write, yet his faculties are very bright, and he is a man of more than ordinary ability.

He was about 38 years of age when he escaped from slavery and did not have an opportunity of obtaining an education up to that time. Since then, however, having been thrown among educated people, who have made a good deal of him, he has imbibed many new ideas, and become very pronounced in his opinions and apt in his remarks. He often shows, moreover, a felicity of expression, and a vivid descriptive power that astonish his hearers.

The writer follows the chain of his narrative from his birth to the present time, interspersing the memoirs with the individual

experiences of other slaves, whose lives were interwoven with his own, making a connected link of events, and also giving an accurate description of the music and minstrelsy of the slaves, their social relations to each other, religion, dancing, and, in fact, all that went to make up the daily life of a slave. "The sunshine" as well as "the shadow," the best features as well as the worst, are drawn from the actual experiences of Ike himself, and are duly attested by credible witnesses of both colors.

As many years have gone by since slavery existed in the United States, a generation has sprung up, to whom the true stories of the old slave days, with a realistic picture of the condition of the colored race at that time, might be not only interesting but also informing, and it is to the young people that the writer especially addresses himself.

The reader must bear in mind, that many of the modes of expression adopted, are not what Uncle Ike used literally or is in the habit of using, but they express the ideas he wishes to convey. In the sketch of his interview at the White House with President Grant, when on the way to revisit the scenes of his old slave life, the conversation is given almost verbatim, for, knowing it was an interesting epoch in his career, he had the whole affair written down in full by a friend, a few hours after. Had he not done so however, the interview was so thoroughly engraven on his memory, that it never could be forgotten under any circumstances. The writer has simply taken a chaotic mass of notes, and reduced the chaos into a narrative form.

The engraving represents Ike as he was in 1872, and is an excellent likeness of the old man. It was taken when in Washington, while he was on his trip to old Virginia, and the copy was made by the Photo-Engraving Company of New York City.

Now, while the chariot of time, containing our colored friend, drawn by the ever existing steeds "Sunshine and Shadow," rolls onward, conveying him from the "Sunny South," where his slave life was spent, to the Palestine of his hopes up North, the reins are held by "Tege," who asks, as this is only a maiden effort in literature's wide field, a merciful judgment for the

AUTHOR.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

—OF—

SLAVE LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Sixty-three years ago I was ushered into this world, first seeing light in the beautiful county of King George, Virginia. My first impressions are of when, as a little picaninny, I had the run of a large plantation, with plenty to eat, drink and a surfeit of play to keep me merry. Those were happy days, and I was surrounded by loving parents and plenty of brothers and sisters. The estate was owned by Mr. John O. Washington, a gentleman of the old school, courtly in his bearings, and with a gentle deference to ladies that made him a general favorite with them. He was kind as a master, but left too much power in the hands of his overseers; and as his estate was a very large one, each farm on it was under the rule of a petty despot who could do about as he liked as long as the property was not endangered. There were five farms on the estate, the least of which had over five-hundred acres, and two of them, called Potomac View and Plentiful Farms, were under one overseer named Mullen, a savage tyrannical man who would whip the slaves on very slight provocations. He had in his power some seven hundred and sixty slaves, including some that were free-born and who worked with

the others. I have often seen colored men and women, and even little children, stripped and chained to the whipping post and whipped until the blood streamed down their bare backs, and some of the more unruly ones would have their poor tortured flesh worked in a mixture of pepper and salt that would cause the greatest agony. I know from a dear experience that this is a fact, for I have suffered myself, and my blood boils now when I think of the enormities committed.

But there is a brighter and a pleasanter side as well, for as a race we are generally buoyant and light-hearted; soon forget grief and have a capability for enjoying life that is even greater than our white brothers with all their higher education. We were social and affectionate and the ties of kindred were strong within us. The marriage ceremony was very often omitted with us, and the overseer would simply bring some female slave and say, "you live with this woman," and that was about all there was to it. At a later date on another plantation that is just the way I was married myself. It was a beautiful tract of country in which we lived. The woods were full of chestnut trees, and we would gather enough to last us all winter. The many little lakes throughout that region were filled with fish, and as a wee urchin with little to do I had a very happy boyhood. I little knew of the dark clouds which would later on encompass me and of the helpless misery I should pass through. I was born a free negro, my father being free, and until five years of age we were a united family. At that time the agitation commenced about sending all free negroes to Liberia, in Africa, where a settlement was forming to consist of those who had been slaves, but had got their freedom. It was painted up as a perfect paradise by those interested in having free negroes shipped there, but some colored men who had been once and returned told very different stories about fevers, hostile tribes that fought to drive the colony away, and other discouragements. At last a law was passed that all free negroes over twenty-one years of age would have to go, or else return to slavery, and those under that age could have guardians appointed who would see to their interests.

My father would not think of going to Liberia, and so at last he left us and went to England, first of all having Mr. John O. Washington appointed as my guardian.

One of the chief reasons for having free negroes go to Liberia, as I understand it, was because they caused the slaves to feel discontented, and this movement was simply a matter of policy. Mr. Washington was to be my guardian until I was twenty-one years of age, and before that time he was to apprentice me to the carpenter's trade in Washington for five years, but unfortunately he died only a few years afterwards, and no new guardian took his place. I remained on the estate, and now, as I was getting older, had to work a good deal harder, but I was very large and powerfully built, and did not mind it a bit. It was only the thought that haunted me, that my freedom was endangered, a sort of undefined dread that all was not right. Of course, my ideas of slavery and freedom were very different from what they are now, but I knew that to be a freeman meant a good deal, and that I could not be sold away from all those whom I had learned to love, and whom, from long association, it would rend asunder the tenderest ties to separate me.

Mr. John O. Washington's widow was quite a fine-looking woman, and it was not long after the late lamented John had been buried, before she had several admirers, but none of them were as welcome as a certain cotton speculator, named John Braxton, whom she met at Sulphur Springs. He was a fashionable, fine-looking man, and I remember him well, when he came courting mistress, how he would dash up on horseback on a fine mettlesome animal, and I would rush to open the big gate for him. He was always free with his money, and generally threw me a quarter. At last Mrs. Washington surrendered, and John Braxton became presiding officer of the estate. At the time when he was courting the widow, he was in financial difficulties, and not long after the marriage took place, he became so involved, that I remember, the sheriff came down and arrested him, taking him in handcuffs to King George county jail. Here he would have staid for a while, only for his wife, who, to save him,

signed papers forfeiting all right to the estate during her lifetime. At her death it would revert to her nephew, Mr. John Washington, at this time quite a young man, and the next direct heir. I was the first to mount the auction block, in company with my sisters Kitty, Milly, Mary and brother John. I was leased to an Englishman, named Drewey B. Fitzhugh, for one hundred and eighty dollars, and went to live on his farm, some five miles distant. Nothing of an eventful nature occurred for five years, when Fitzhugh, well knowing I had no one to protect me, and appreciating my great strength and willingness to work, offered young Mr. Washington the sum of five hundred dollars more for me, if he would sell me out and out. This, after some demur, he did, and the papers were made out to that effect. Then I felt I was indeed a slave, and many, many times I would ponder on means of escape. I knew my way all over the country round about, and all sorts of secret hiding places I carefully remembered, in case they might ever be needed by me; and it was well I did so, for afterwards the knowledge thus gathered was of great use to me. While with Mr. Fitzhugh, I was married to Eliza Wheeler in the manner before described, and I knew that escape meant separation from her.

The crisis in my life came at last in the summer of the year 1854. I was then a heavy built man, over six feet in height, and weighing over two hundred and sixty pounds, yet there was no superfluous flesh on me—it was clear bone and sinew—and I never knew what it was to have a pain or an ache. I felt vigorous, and with all my weight I stepped as light and elastic as a little child. I felt God had never intended me to be a slave all my life, and this opinion was strengthened when in some of my midnight wanderings I made my way to Allen's woods, not far from Fitzhugh's farm and there held council and long talk with two brothers named James and Joe Westcott, of Boston. They were engaged in getting out ship timber, and painted a vivid picture of the life, enterprise and business of the northern cities. They told me of the growing feeling that slavery was a curse and should be abolished, and also that if ever I attempted

to escape, that willing hands and noble hearts would respond to help me, as soon as I got far enough north to be near them. I drank all this magic tale of freedom to be gained, and listened as eagerly as a child does to a marvelous story, and all my thoughts were on the one subject. I was born a free man, and by the help of God I was going to be one again. I was a slave now only through fraud, and I felt I must bend all my energies to get away. I talked with a friend of mine, named Willis, about visiting these Massachusetts men, and all they said to me, but he proved false and told his folks about it, and they in turn told others. At last three farmers united against me, and came to Mr. Fitzhugh with the story, that I was making the negroes on the surrounding farms discontented by talking about freedom and liberty up north, and a great deal to that effect. At this time what is known as the Fillmore law was rigidly enforced, and the penalty for any northern man visiting negro quarters and talking to slaves was very severe. The penitentiary and often the bullet was the penalty; and Massachusetts men were especially hated for their anti-slavery proclivities. Well, these three farmers offered Fitzhugh five hundred dollars over and above what he could get for me, as they wished me sent out of the county. They claimed that I was in the habit of stealing away at night to visit these Westcott brothers and imbibing dangerous ideas from them, and that these I would disseminate among others' slaves, creating discontent and making them sullen and disobedient. There may have been some truth in this and I should have been more politic in my talk, but out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh, and I could not help it.

Fitzhugh finally agreed to their terms and I was sold to George A. Ayler of Fredericksburg, Virginia, a town situated on the Rappahannock river. Thither I was removed and kept by him in a sort of pen, where slaves and cattle were huddled promiscuously together. I was locked up at night in a little room just large enough to stand up in and kept there for nine days; then I was sold to Dr. James, a Tennessee slave dealer, who gave fifteen hundred dollars for me. I kept steadily rising in the

slave market, and the doctor intended to ship me with a large gang to Georgia. One day I got leave to go across the road, to get some clothes that we had left in a house just opposite our prison pen. I was accompanied by a friend named Henry Banks, who afterwards accompanied me in my many wanderings when I escaped. As soon as we got over we made our way through the back yard and then struck out for the bridge across the Rapahannock. Being hailed three times as we crossed the bridge, we made no response but only hurried the faster; we soon reached Falmouth, a small place one and one-quarter miles from Fredericksburg. It lay in a sort of hollow at the base of a high hill. We ran and walked up the heights beyond Falmouth and skirted all along the woods until we heard the dread baying of the bloodhounds and then knew the alarm had been given and our pursuers were upon us. We had taken the precaution to bring with us some red onions and spruce pine for the purpose of rubbing our boots so as to divert the scent of the dogs. We could just see the slave hunters with the pack of hounds gliding like a black thread in the distance and then we struck straight into the woods. We went up to a big leafy tree and commenced rubbing our backs vigorously against the bark. This was for the purpose of making the dogs think we had climbed it. The scent of the onions and spruce pine we rubbed on our boots would not be followed by them, while the human scent on the bark would always claim their attention. Escaping slaves frequently have adopted this stratagem and got away successfully when almost captured. Well, on they came, and we could see their fierce eyes and foam-flecked tongues lolling out of their mouths as they rushed savagely after us. They were urged on by the shouts and curses of the slave hunters, and those who have ever been pursued by wolves would have some idea of the situation. Many a poor fugitive slave has been torn limb from limb by those ferocious brutes set on by the human tigers behind them. We started away as soon as possible and heard the crew of demons as they surrounded the tree we had left, and then as we rushed madly off the deep baying sounds gradually died out in the distance.

Night came but we tarried not. It was a matter of life or death, and liberty was before us. We traveled in the direction of Fitzhugh's farm where I had left my wife, and by hiding in thickets, swamps and caves in the day time and journeying nights, we at last reached the place. I saw my wife under cover of the darkness and imparted all my plans to her. Banks and I kept together, knowing that union was strength, and we hid in a cave near the farm, that I had discovered in one of my previous wanderings. We staid there for three weeks, and then another change came upon my fortunes.

CHAPTER II.

The cave that Banks and I hid ourselves in, was situated at the head of what was known as Williams' creek, and the sides were very steep, in some places almost perpendicular. The spot chosen by us was where the bank shelved inwards, leaving a space of a few feet between its base and the water's edge. We had picked up an old spade in one of our midnight tramps, and dug quite a hole in the side of the bank so we could nearly stand upright, and had plenty of room to sleep in, as well as a place to roast corn or what other farm truck we could lay our hands on. In order that we would not be smoked out, we dug a hole from the top of the bank clear through to our cave, a distance of some fifteen feet, and then fixed the top of our earthen stovepipe so it wouldn't be noticed, by covering it up with light branches and leaves. The trees grew so thick, and fires in the woods were so common, that we did not apprehend much danger of discovery from that source anyway.

I knew my wife would be watched pretty closely, and it would be impossible for her to bring me food, so we both foraged around at night, picking up what we could and returning to our nest before daylight. We knew also, that just now there would be a great hue and cry after us, and big rewards would be offered for

our capture. We were only forty-five miles from Fredericksburg, and it was known where I came from, so we had to be continually on the alert to guard against surprises. Many long hours did Banks and I talk and plan about what we would do, and where our next move should be made. A fugitive slave had everything against him, the laws of the United States, big rewards offered for his capture, and no knowledge of the country he was to pass through. He had no compass to guide him in his long, weary journey for freedom, and was forced to shun every human face. Well might he despair of ever reaching the goal, for, like the Arab, every man's hand was against him, and there were very few good Samaritans to help the unfortunate on his way until he got further north. Where he might have met kindness and encouragement of a practical nature, he would fear and tremble to ask it. So often did hypocrisy clothe itself in the garments of benevolence, and self-interest be the governing motive, that he would find too late that his confidence had been treacherously betrayed. I mention these few facts so my readers will understand the difficulties of our situation and the many unknown perils we would have to face. I was very fortunate in having Banks for a companion, and we mutually cheered each other in those hours of gloom and despair. I would say to him, "Now, Banks, you know I would rather be shot dead than meet the man that bought me, for you know how we both promised we would go freely with him, but when I thought of my birthright, I made up my mind to fool him and try and get away. You know I was born free and was sold by those people, when before God and man they had no right to do so. I've made up my mind to be either a free man or a dead one. I will not go back to my chains again."

"Well," Banks would say, "I was not born free myself, but a great many of my folks were and some of them are now living happily up north, in Pennsylvania. If you like, I will tell you a little of my story. It is full of hard knocks and harsh usage, perhaps like your own, and many times have I felt like giving up the battle."

"Go on, Henry," said I, "let me hear it."

"Well, I was born in Mattaponi County, Virginia, and as early back as I can remember, my master was a mean, bad man. He would whip his slaves at every opportunity and seemed to have an especial spite against me, so much so, that I made continual efforts to escape, being every time captured and terribly beaten. The last time I ran away he caught me with his hounds, and I was torn badly by them. The day after my capture he came and looked hard at me, and setting his teeth together, hissed out, 'I'm going to cure you of this fever for running away, if I have to kill you to do it.' Then he got two big fellows to tie my hands together over the whipping post. He had my feet tied also, and in that position I was suspended by my hands so my feet barely touched the ground. All the whippings I have had were tame in comparison with this one. The lash was laid on until my back was perfectly raw, and it was only when I fainted that my cruel master stopped. When I became conscious, he glared at me, and grasping a large cat that was by, he dragged it across my back while its claws stuck into the flesh like so many fish-hooks. This is gospel truth, Ike, as true as I am a living man."

"Go on, boy, go on," I said, "I believe you."

"Well, then, he took and washed my back in spirits of turpentine, pepper and salt, so as to keep the flies off and the flesh from mortifying. But all this ill-treatment only aroused me the more and as soon as my strength came back I started off again. This time I managed to reach the city of Alexandria, over sixty miles distant. It was nightfall when, tired, worn and footsore, I entered the streets of the town. I was just faint with exhaustion and could hardly drag myself along. I had made up my mind to go to England in some ship and so asked a quiet, decent-looking man whom I met, some questions about sailing vessels and if he knew of any that were short of hands. He eyed me all over and then said, 'Well, yes, my man, I do; you have come to the right person for information. I am in the vessel business myself and buy ship stores for them. Come along my man. I know who you are; don't be alarmed. I'm a friend to such as you

and will help all the slaves I can to escape.' He talked so cheerfully and gave me such kindly counsel that a great load seemed to lift from my mind and I felt hope arise anew in my breast. I could hardly believe freedom was in my grasp as this man told me it was; it seemed too good to be true. He said he knew of a sailing vessel that needed extra help and he would get me a job on her; the captain was an Englishman and would be only too glad to help me. I followed my protector, silently pressing his hand with gratitude, and the tears stole down my cheeks, tears of joy that I would soon bid farewell to a land that had made life both a burden and a curse to me; a country that in one of its national songs calls itself 'the home of the brave and the land of the free,'—hollow mockery, when so many millions were groaning for this very freedom.

I now entered an office in the lower end of the town where my conductor said he had some business. The moment we got into a little room, where there were a lot of rough men sitting around, he said, 'Well, boys, I've brought you a runaway nigger I've captured. Lock him up while we look for his owner.' They led me away and put me in a cell, for it was a police station to which I had been decoyed, and it seems there was an advertisement in one of the city papers, describing me and offering a reward for my capture.

This sudden change in my fortunes from the height of joy and hope to the very depths of despair was hard to bear, and I groaned all through that weary, miserable night, how long, great Lord, how long ! I expected nothing short of being tortured to death, for I knew the revengeful spirit of my master, and he would gratify his evil passions, no matter at what cost. Morning came at last and they told me my boss had been telegraphed for and would soon be here. When he did come he said to the officers, 'It's no use; I cannot cure that nigger of running away. I will have to sell him.' Then, giving me a parting kick, he went out and sold me to George Ayler, who was on his way to Fredericksburg. Ayler took me with him, and then he bought you, and that is how we met."

"Well, Banks," I said, "you have had a tough time of it. I hope, old man, we will both get out of this scrape. Why did you trust that fellow? Didn't his face show that he was a mean, sneaking snake in the grass?"

"No," replied Banks, "he had a kindly expression and won my confidence completely. Remember, I reached the city hungry and worn out, and this stranger spoke the first kind word I had heard for months. Curses and blows were what I had been used to, and this man's cheering words melted right into my heart."

I said, "There are lots of 'wolves in sheep's clothing,' and we will have to be very careful to whom we speak when we make our next attempt to reach free soil." I know as a fact that this man who deceived Banks was of a type very common to the south in those days. He was a sort of detective and made a business of hunting runaway slaves. When northern men would be visiting the big plantations south of Dixie's line, the proprietors would say to them, "You Yanks up north think our slaves would like to leave us, don't you? That is the sentiment of your papers. Now you just go among my slaves and ask any of them at random, if they would not like to be free and questions of that sort. Go now and I'll not be present, so there will be no intimidation about it." Then the northern man, armed with this permission, would ask several if they thought they would not be happier free than as slaves, and the invariable reply would be, "Oh, no, massa; we love our boss. He is good and kind to us and we have plenty to eat and drink." Perhaps all the time they were miserably treated, badly fed and badly clothed, but from long experience had found that if their true sentiments were expressed, they were often deceived and all their talk retailed to their master, who would use the lash unsparingly upon them. They found the safer way was to distrust all strangers and in that way save themselves no end of trouble. So genuine northern men, whose sympathies were enlisted in their behalf, would go back to their homes, imbued with the idea that slavery was not such a bad affair after all and that most of the slaves were contented and happy, the real facts of the case being unknown to them. Many of the

slaves themselves were treacherous to each other, and while giving the Judas kiss would betray those they professed to love. That was the way Willis did with me. He professed to enter into all my plans and then gave them all away, so as to curry favor with the powers that be.

Poor Banks was troubled with great fits of depression, and no wonder, after what he had passed through, and at best our outlook was by no means cheerful. What trackless wastes and swamps lay between us and liberty, with no compass or means to guide ourselves correctly. I was naturally of a more cheerful disposition, generally buoyant and light-hearted, and now and then would try to sing a little, in a low, subdued voice, a sort of monotone chant that slaves would often indulge in. I don't think it was calculated to liven Banks' spirits, and after he joined me in a few verses we would soon come to a full stop and get to talking again.

All this time the woods that surrounded us were searched through and through, but they never found us. Now and then we would hear the sound of voices or the peculiar bay of the hounds, but they would pass by and our quiet nook was undiscovered. The trees were very thick around where we were, and whatever smoke issued from the small aperture at the top of the bank was lost out of sight before it passed through its leafy way. We found out afterwards that there was a reward of three hundred dollars offered for each of us, and often Mullen, White and Bryant, three of the overseers of the Washington estate, were on the watch to capture us.

I had rigged up a sort of a weapon out of an old carving knife blade and tied it on the end of a stout pole. This knife was sharpened so that it would cut most anything, and one morning while I was out alone walking in the woods, near by I suddenly heard the crackling of twigs and bushes, and the next moment two bloodhounds sprang upon me. I slashed at the foremost one and swung the heavy pole around as he sprang at my throat, cutting off his fore legs and laying him writhing and moaning on the ground. The other furious brute, nothing daunted by the

fate of his companion, came right at me, and as the stick had fallen out of my hand I had no time to get it, but seizing a large stone that lay handy, I struck him violently on the head, still retaining the stone and following up by a perfect shower of blows until he was dead. I finished the other one the same way and then rushed back to the cave, where I found Banks trembling with fear and apprehension, that I had either been killed or captured. I was covered with blood, fortunately not my own, and I must have looked as though I had come out of a hard conflict. I soon quieted Bank's fears and we both went out at night and buried the dogs, so they would not draw attention to our retreat.

It was only a day or two after this that we were surprised by hearing voices close upon us. We had just returned in the grey of the morning, after being out several hours prospecting for food, when we noticed that we were followed. It seems that we had been observed by that man Mullen, and he was accompanied by Bryant and White. They had seen us on the bank alone and rushed close at our heels. We got into the cave and quickly disappeared from view, trusting they would not discover us. We were soon made painfully aware such was not the case, and the next moment voices were heard close by us, where they all stood with guns ready to shoot us if we resisted. With oaths and all sorts of vile language they commanded us to come out and deliver ourselves up, or else have our brains blown out. I said, "I will come out; but will not give myself up." I walked out, followed by Banks, feeling that my last moments had come. I was resolved to sell my life as dearly as possible. When we stepped out to the edge of the creek, Mullen presented his gun at my breast and told me to surrender. I said, "Never; I'll die first," and striking the gun to one side, I sprang into the creek and Banks right beside me. We did this so suddenly it threw them off their guard and necessarily destroyed their aim. We both dashed through the creek, and as I climbed up the marsh on the other side, I received a full charge of shot in my right arm and leg, many of which have never been extracted. Banks was shot in the back and we both fell helpless to the ground,

bathed in blood. Then they all sprang upon us and rained blows until satisfied we were incapable of further resistance.

CHAPTER III.

We were captured on a quiet Sabbath morning, about ten o'clock, when the sun was smiling brightly, and leaves were rustling with their forest music. While the good people of the land were on their way to God's house to pray for all mankind, here were two poor wayfarers shot down deliberately, by permission of the laws of this very land. Our captors tied our hands so tight with hitching straps, that we were fain to cry out in our great agony, but knowing it would be of no avail, and only gratify the malice of our captors we bore it all in silence. They had a large wagon close by, and in this we were driven to King George county jail. Before reaching there my wrists swelled up so that they covered the hitching strap that I was tied with, and I asked Mullen to loosen it a little so as to relieve my misery. He refused with oaths, saying, "You shall never get away from us; we wont give you a chance," and they struck me repeatedly in the face and kicked each of us. On reaching the jail the sheriff, whose name was Dr. Hunter, came up and looked at us. I then had twenty-nine shot in my right arm and forty in my right leg. The doctor counted the holes in the flesh and said as he gazed at the mangled members, "If they were my niggers I would rather have them shot dead than wounded this way." He abused them roundly for their bad usage of us, not perhaps so much on the grounds of humanity, as because we had depreciated in value, being not so marketable, and the doctor hated to see good property destroyed. Mullen, Bryant and White dared say nothing in reply to him, for he was rich and they were poor, but they cringed and fawned around him like the curs they were. The doctor then had us removed to a comfortable place, and dressed our wounds himself; he was a skillful man, and soon

had us on our feet again. We were put in the dungeon or cell where men condemned to be hung were kept, not a very cheerful place to be sure, but I could not help wishing I should meet that fate rather than be a slave again. I thought of the many sad, desperate men this cell had held, and wondered what their inmost secret feelings were with death staring them in the face, and life's moments ebbing swiftly away.

Doctor James, the slave dealer who had bought me from Ayler, was at this time away, further south in Georgia, with a large gang of slaves he had taken there to sell. Knowing this fact the sheriff telegraphed to James' partner in Richmond, and he came on at once, but when he saw how crippled we were he refused to pay the six hundred dollars reward offered for us both, and told Sheriff Hunter to keep us in the jail until James came back. We were well treated while there, which was about twenty-eight days, and during that time my thoughts were directed to Him whom I never knew before. I felt that without His help I would never be free, and I prayed to my Great Father above to be with me in this time of trouble, and in His wisdom I relied. I felt a consciousness of His near presence and it seemed as though some unseen power personally addressed me.

It was impossible to escape from the cell we were confined in. As before stated it was the one in which condemned murderers and those convicted of the most heinous offences were incarcerated. It was very strong and constantly guarded; but Providence seemed to be helping us, for after being in it for about ten days Banks was taken very ill with malarial fever, owing a good deal to the damp walls, and we were removed to a roomier and pleasanter cell up-stairs. It had two windows, one of which faced the jailor's house, and the other was on the opposite side. We had more light than in the dungeon, and altogether it was a vast improvement for us. Nothing could arouse me, however, from the despondent feeling, which weighed me down like a heavy cloud. Promptly as the sun arose I would greet him with a good morning, and as he sank in the west in all his scarlet splendor I would say farewell, hoping I would not live to see him again,

for I longed to die and be out of a world that stifled all of my best feelings, and in which on every side I met with only curses and blows.

Shortly after being put in this upper cell I commenced to look around for a means of escape. I pulled off one of the legs of a stove that was stored in a corner of our room, and with this I pried off a board on the side of our cell and found a small strip of iron about a foot long in one corner, which I managed to rip off, and then I put back the board so that everything would look undisturbed. With this iron strip I worked unceasingly on the east window, when I could do so unobserved, but all my efforts seemed in vain; it was too strong for me. The last day we were to be in our prison had come. It was Thursday. How well do I remember it and the sinking feeling that oppressed my heart when the jailor informed us that our master, Dr. James, had returned from Georgia and was now in Fredericksburg, expecting to be at the jail next morning. All hope seemed to leave me and I fully expected to spend my future days in slavery. After a while I grew more composed over the bad news of master's return, and repeated with a calm sort of desperation that I would rather die than see the man that bought me. I then prayed to God that if I was to be captured again not to let me escape out of there, but if I could get away for Him to show me in His wisdom what to do. I had prayed both night and day up to this time and now began to think God had given me up. I got up and walked to the window, saying: "Window, I will never try you again unless in God's name I am told to do so." I turned away and started right across the floor to the opposite side to try and break the other window open. I knew it was the last day I had any chance and I felt desperate. Just at that moment I heard a voice say distinctly to me: "Go back to the window you have left. Since you have declared to do what is ordered in My name I will be with you." I stood still and dared not move either back or forward. The mysterious voice was still ringing in my ears and I felt as one dazed; I feared to go back until my mind became impressed with the idea that it really was

the voice of the Great Master I had heard. He had taken pity on me in my extremity and would now help me. Something seemed to say, "Whose name did you invoke?" and I cried aloud, "God's name." I then went right back to the window and an unseen power directed me just what to do. Remember, I had been at work at this window for many weary days and nights and only a few minutes previously had exerted all my strength to burst it open, but in vain. Now, after leaving it and then coming back again in obedience to the mysterious mandate, I was not five minutes in splitting the bottom sill, in which the grates were fastened. While taking out the sash I accidentally broke two of the panes of glass, and this I felt would betray me and lead to discovery of our plans. Now that I knew that all things were ready for us to escape at night this one accident spoiled it all. The guard had to come in twice before nightfall and see if everything was right, and I felt he could not help but notice the broken panes. I put in the sash, broke off the fragment of glass left, put all the pieces in the stove, and listened for the footfall of our jailor. Our fate hung on a very slender thread, for if he saw anything was wrong all was lost, and as the broken glass was so plain before him it seemed almost impossible not to perceive it. At last a heavy tramp was heard and I tried to hold my breath as he came in. How eagerly we both noticed his every movement. The door grated harshly on the rusty hinges and he entered quickly, giving us a searching glance. Then, seeing we were quietly resting, he passed on and deliberately walked up to the broken window and looked out. We thought we were lost, but no; God seemed to blind his mind, and though he saw with his eyes he did not realize that anything was amiss; and finally, after looking for several moments turned unconcernedly on his heel and left us. Then I fell on my knees and said, "Surely, Lord, Thou art with us," and something seemed to murmur in reply, "all will yet be well." But we had still another ordeal to go through, for after supper he would return to see if everything was safe for the night. The minutes were like hours. Our fate seemed to hang on the turn of a die, and we ardently longed for

the moments to fly quicker. "Hope deferred truly maketh the heart sick," and I fairly yearned to be out in the fresh air once more. Would the long, long day never go by, dragging along slowly, so slowly? We heard the heavy metallic pendulum with its steady tick, and from time to time the clock would sonorously strike the hour. I prayed that God would blind the jailor's eyes and mind as before, so that he would not see or realize what had been done. Thus silently and prayerfully we awaited his coming. The slanting rays of the sun told us that night was coming on and soon her dark mantle began to fold around our prison home. Under her friendly veil we would make one last desperate effort to free ourselves again. At last the tread of our jailor was heard, and for a moment I wished the earth would open and swallow me, so fearful had I become of discovery. I, who knew not the meaning of nerves, felt completely unstrung, and I quivered and shook with fear. Banks lay close by me, and I said to him: "Remember Daniel was saved even when in the lion's den, and we will yet be saved from these human tigers." As if to verify what I had said, the guard gave but a casual glance around, staid only a few moments, and left. To paint the relief we felt were impossible. I clasped Banks and he me, and looking into each other's eyes we both breathed one mighty prayer of thankfulness to the great overruling power that we felt had saved us.

Now, friends, you may think of this day's experience just as you please, but all I have related is true. I firmly believe, that it was the Good Father in Heaven who took pity on two of the humblest of his creatures, and told me just what to do. You may call me superstitious if you like, but I give the facts as they occurred and shall always cling to the belief that it was God himself who spoke to me, and I feel all the happier in doing so.

Now, that the jailor was gone and we were left to ourselves for the night, we took the bed-clothes and made them into a rope, so that we could lower ourselves from the window to the ground below, a distance of some thirty feet. I went first and found that the rope was ten feet too short, and with a dull heavy thud I drop-

ped to the ground, Banks followed quickly and came down pretty solidly. This was about nine o'clock and we got away undiscovered as it was very dark. That night we made over eighteen miles and reached Fitzhugh's farm once more. We had to make for that first, as we did not know where else to go, and we could there get some plan of operations laid as to our future course.

It was early Friday morning when I quietly knocked on my wife's cabin door and great was her amazement to see me. She said she thought I was gone for good this time and she had never expected to see me again. After getting some food, we went back to the woods, and digging a cave in the side of a gully about two miles from the other one, we lay still during the day, and at night I saw my wife again. She then told me that Fitzhugh at dinner time had said, "Ike has escaped again, and Dr. James after arriving at the jail was fearfully enraged. He now offers a reward of six-hundred dollars for the capture of each, either dead or alive." Fitzhugh said also, he wished I would escape, but thought I had no chance, as there was a patrol of sixteen or twenty men scouring the country after me. This was not very cheering news, to be sure, but it was just what might have been expected.

One night of the following week, I went out after some food to the cabin of a friendly colored man, named John Fleming, and, as I came up the road, I heard some men talking near me. At first I thought that James Arnold, a white man, was bringing home a lot of slaves from the upper farm to their cabins. I knew I had best keep shady till they had passed by, so I went under some cedar bushes, which grew very low on the ground and crawled as near the road as I could without being observed. I was astonished and alarmed at seeing a gang of sixteen white men armed with guns. I heard them distinctly say, that they were going down to my mother's, where they expected to kill or capture me. They were pretty sure I was around there, they said, and would have me dead or alive. One of them remarked, that it was just as cheap to kill me, as the same reward was offered for my head, and he proposed to shoot me on sight. You can

imagine the feelings of a poor hunted fugitive, lying within a few yards of the men bent on killing him. The slightest movement and I would be discovered. But how fortunate I was to have overheard them. I had often been at my mother's late at night, and it was by the merest chance I was not there this evening, for to go there had been my intention. I remember that I once saw the head of a colored man rolled out of a sack. He was shot while attempting to escape. There was a heavy reward offered for his head, dead or alive, and the result was a dead head. Now I said to myself, wherever my head goes, my body shall follow it, for I had strong objections to its being removed from my shoulders. I then joined Banks, and told him what had occurred. I said: "Henry, we cannot stay here any longer; we had better risk dying on the road than be killed, as we surely will be, if we keep to the cave." So with this brief talk we made up our minds to go somewhere anyway, we knew not whither, but anywhere from there. Banks had some free folks, cousins of his, who went now and then to Pennsylvania, and he suggested that we go to his mother's home near Fredericksburg and see if she could direct us what route to take. This was on a Saturday in November, 1854, and we had just made all arrangements to start, when we met a colored man named Christopher Nicholas in the woods. He had been severely beaten by his master and had made up his mind to join us if possible, for he had heard of our being somewhere near. Nicholas had been serving in the capacity of miller and had been misused shamefully for very slight causes. He and I were old friends and gladly greeted each other.

We did not get started for our destination till Monday, December 1st, 1854, and the night before I spent with my wife and mother bidding them farewell. We traveled all of Monday night and hid in the thickets in the day time. It took us two nights to reach Fredericksburg, which we did without any interruption, and at last stopped in front of the house where Banks' mother lived. He went in and Nicholas and I stood near the door watching him, for we thought a great deal depended on this in-

terview. No sooner did Banks' mother set eyes on him, than she exclaimed, "Oh my God, child, go out, the white people have just been after you, and are now searching around here; they may be back any moment."

Banks did not wait to hear more. No tender adieus were uttered, for life and liberty were at stake, and casting his eyes on his old mother for the last time in this world, he rushed from her presence. We then fell back in the woods again, going right through Falmouth, taking the Blue Ridge Mountain road and resolving to try our best to reach Pennsylvania, or at any rate to reach the northern states, and from there get to Canada. As we walked along I prayed that God would direct our steps rightly and lead us through the wilderness to the happy land of promise.

We tramped all night along the lonely road and the next day rested as before. At eventide we started again and met with a colored man near Morrisville. We told him we were very hungry and wanted to know which was the way to Warrenton, as we expected food and shelter there. He told us, and, pointing to a hotel ahead, said he was going there and would see that we got something to eat if we went with him. When the hotel was reached he said, "I have to go on a little ways ahead; you go in and I'll be back in a short time and attend to your wants." He pointed to a back door and told us to go in there, and we three started for it while he walked on. I suspected all was not right from his manner and told Banks and Nicholas to hide near by in the woods and I would go in and see if I could get some food for us, for we were about famished. Just as I got to the door I heard voices coming down the road, and, looking up, I saw four men walking rapidly toward the hotel. I sprang from the door and walked straight up to them, going right between the group. I heard the same colored man say to his white companions: "There are three colored fellows in here who enquired of me the way to Warrenton. I believe from their appearance and questions that they are runaway slaves, and probably there is a good reward for their capture." I recognized the Judas that would betray us as our quondam friend of a few minutes before, and

knew that he expected to find three men, not one, which explains why he did not notice me as I was alone. I hastily cut around in the woods and got my companions and we started, resolving to be more guarded in the future. However, we had to eat; the engine must have fuel to keep it going; so, coming to a little cabin by the wayside, which we knew was likely to be occupied by a colored family, we knocked timidly at the door and asked for food. We were kindly welcomed by its inmates, and after a hearty meal and a short rest we started for Warrenton, having been directed the proper way by our friend. He also told us the name of the colored man whom he thought had met and tried to deceive us. He said the fellow made many a five or ten dollars in the mean business of informing on runaway slaves. He would get their confidence and then betray it for a trifling sum. I mentally put him down in my memory and resolved that if we ever met he would feel badly about it. Doing good to those that spitefully use you is one of the most difficult of the Christian roads to grace, and few there are who travel therein. We reached Warrenton late at night and passed through its silent streets unmolested.

CHAPTER IV.

We did not tarry in Warrenton, but kept right on, taking the Alexandria railroad, and when the day began to dawn and the sun to peep forth we hid in the woods, and by nightfall were up and off on our long journey again. We had not covered much ground before we were stopped by an old man with a gun and a large dog. We asked him for something to eat and he replied by enquiring where we were going. We said we were carpenters, and were hired in Alexandria to go to work in Warrenton. He said: "Where are your passes?"

"We have none," I replied.

Then he looked daggers at us and said: "You cannot go any

further; you must come with me," and he made a menacing motion with his gun, which he hastily unslung off his back.

"But we have to go," I said, "for we were hired to go there, and go we will, and neither you nor your dog will stop us."

"We'll see about that," he remarked, and as we quickly moved away from him he brought the gun to his shoulder and fired at us, but in his excitement he aimed too high and the charge went harmlessly through the air. Then he set his dog on us. With a fierce growl he bounded like a tiger at my throat, but by a well-directed kick I laid him out, and he returned to his aged master howling pitiously. His owner gave up following us, and the last I saw of him he was shaking his fist in impotent rage. I could not help but admire the courage of the old man, who all alone halted three stout, desperate fellows like ourselves. As his frail body stood out in bold relief beneath the lengthening shadows of the evening I could but think of the power he represented. In that menacing hand stretched out to grasp us lay oppression and a grinding tyranny that had covered the land with rivers of tears and wails of agony. It was backed up by all the laws which the ingenuity of man could devise to prevent our escape and to tighten our bonds.

On leaving the old man we retraced our steps toward Warrenton so as to mislead him, for we knew he would be likely to get a posse of slave-hunters and pursue us. Then when out of his sight we doubled in the woods and once more resumed our journey toward what we supposed was the north. For over two days and nights we had gone without food and now the exercise of walking increased our hunger, and having big frames to keep supplied with flesh and blood we endured great suffering. They say one suffers most in the first stages of hunger; that later on the senses not being so bright a sort of insensibility steals over the mind and an indifference to all one's surroundings. I know that I could have eaten almost anything, and I longed for the sight of a friendly cabin where we could rest and supply the inner man. We had no idea where the city of Alexandria was and would have avoided it as if it were the plague, after Banks' ex-

perience there. So you may imagine our surprise and fright when on walking into a town from the railroad on a dark night, when but few lights could be seen, as it was after twelve o'clock, to find in the morning that we were in the center of Alexandria.

Banks said: "Why, this is the place where I was captured. I remember seeing that building," pointing to a peculiarly shaped edifice. "We must get out of here, and that right quick."

As only the first gray streaks of dawn had begun to appear we managed to steal away without being molested and reached the woods with quick-beating hearts and anxious faces. Then when night came on we crept out and got on the railroad track and walked toward Washington, which was only eight miles distant. Coming very near Washington we reached a tollgate and bought a cigar apiece from the man who kept it, who took us for Washington darkies. He also gave us some food, and we started out again greatly refreshed. We had a little money, which came very handy in emergencies like the present, for these cigars were the same as passports to us. The moment we got them we struck boldly for Washington and got in that same night without being stopped. You see going to the city we were not so likely to be suspected of being runaways as we would be if fleeing from it, and now as we had got there the plan we adopted was this: All of us lit our cigars and put our hats on one side of our heads as though we were out on a lark together. Then I directed Nicholas to go across the street while Banks and I strolled along together in a free and easy sort of style. This would be about the last thing the authorities would expect in runaways. We passed along the elegant streets, looking everybody in the face and acting as though we feared nothing. We were not suspected in the least, and I heard some one say "Just see those fellows; they seem to be having a good time." I had told Nicholas to watch Banks and me and to turn as we turned. We met several policemen and passed them without their saying a word to us. Not knowing how to get through Washington it was our intention to turn down toward the river and follow its course until we got in the suburbs of the city. It was a cold, rainy night; a

sort of drizzling sleet fell that wet us to the very marrow. We had heard of the Baltimore railroad and wanted to reach it if possible and take the track leading to Philadelphia. So we wandered around through the rain nearly all night. At last we saw lights appear in the different homes near where we lay concealed. People were just starting their fires for the day, and we looked for morning to throw some light on the subject and help us find our way, for we were completely lost and knew not where to turn, and I had about given up all hope of finding the railroad. We were benumbed with the cold and wet, and concluded to go up to some house and risk being captured—food and warmth to keep the human engine going being requisites that must be had at any risk. Just as we started we heard the distant rumbling of a train coming into Washington from Baltimore, as we afterward found. We had been wandering around, as the Jews did in the wilderness, and were only about forty rods from the railroad we had been searching for all night. This inspired us with fresh life, and instead of visiting any house we made a breakfast of hope and warmed ourselves with a good brisk trot. It was barely daylight when we started, and we walked until sunrise told us we had better be careful and hide from view, for the track stood up pretty high and we could easily be seen from a great distance. We then fell back into the woods again, and as the rainfall had ceased we made a rousing fire and dried our clothes by it the best way we could. The numerous hunters, with good pointer dogs, that were in the woods kept us dodging a good deal throughout the day, and we feared they might mistake us for three black crows and shoot us as legitimate game.

We spent two nights walking on the railroad, turning off into the woods in the daytime and resuming our tramp at nightfall, and had nothing to eat during that time. We came upon some colored wood-choppers hard at work felling the numerous pine trees that grew in that section of the country. These men treated us kindly and gave us something to eat. They did not ask us any questions, but the looks of some of them were eloquent with sympathy, and we knew they understood how we were situated

when with a warm pressure of the hand they wished us God-speed on our journey. We did not stay long with them, for the white overseer was expected soon, and there would be great danger of being captured by him. In the early part of the second night while marching along we were suddenly confronted by three white men who had charge of a gang of white laborers on the railroad. They asked us where we were going in such a hurry and I replied "We are on our way to Baltimore."

"Where have you been working?" said the tallest, who seemed to be a man in authority and better dressed than the others.

"We have been chopping wood down here," I said.

"Who for?"

"For John Brown," I replied at random, speaking the first name that came into my mind.

Then they turned and walked along behind us, muttering among themselves in a manner that made my blood run cold, for I knew they had suspicions that all was not right, and I distinctly heard something said about runaway slaves. They kept close to us until we reached some shanties in which a lot of railroad laborers were staying. Then they ran quickly up to them, while we hurried on just as fast as we could run. It was well we did, for almost the next moment we heard the gang after us shouting, swearing and running. Then we knew it was to be a race for life and liberty, and we ran with all the swiftness we were capable of, the whole pack close at our heels. We had one advantage; it was very dark and our enemies had no fire-arms with them, while they evidently thought we had, for no one of them advanced much ahead of the rest. No doubt there were some very fleet runners among such a crowd, that might have easily overtaken us, but we three had good staying power, especially old man Nicholas, who, though over sixty years of age, left both Banks and me far in the rear. He was lithe, active, and didn't have as much flesh to carry along as we had. At last they stopped chasing us and with a parting shout of "we'll get you yet," they turned back. The next morning before daylight we knew we were nearing the city of Baltimore, for the place

was beginning to bestir itself. Winter was upon us and the sun arose late. Long before his rays reached the earth the great city was awake and all was life and bustle. We heard the distant city cries, the whistles of the factories and the whirr of many wheels. How we were to get through Baltimore we did not know. We finally climbed up a high hill, and watched every train as it passed into Baltimore from Washington and carefully noted where it went through. Then early that night we entered on the railway track and started through, going right by the station. After walking about half way, we came to where a lot of tracks ran together and made the mistake of taking a false turn on a side track that led in an entirely different direction, causing us to miss the main trunk line. We discovered this at last and as an excuse for turning back, in case we were observed, we went into a little general store where most everything, from candy up to a suit of clothes was sold. We pretended we wished to buy a suit and selected one for each of us and told the proprietor we would call and get them the next evening. I had him write down my name, which I gave as James Walker. After retracing our steps quite a way we met a train right at the turn going to Philadelphia and just leaving Baltimore. We walked by the side of it until the suburbs of the city were reached, through the long gates that led across the river. After getting outside we traveled all night until daylight, when we came upon a man chopping wood a little distance from the track. I said, "Boys, let us go and see who this man is. He looks like a colored man."

By this time we were quite hungry and I, seeing the others hesitate a little, said, "let us go, anyway, and see what we can do with him and if he will do anything for us." Generally in speaking to the colored people we met in this manner, I would first study the expression of their faces and try to judge whether they would be false or not. If, on inspection I was favorably impressed, I would be perfectly frank with them and say that we were trying to reach the free states and if they wanted to betray us they could do so. This appealing to their better nature and

placing confidence in them, often won them over to our cause. At heart they were all on our side, and it was only self-interest that made them our enemies. We then approached the man who was chopping and he, looking up, nodded a cheery good morning. I rather liked his looks and so resolved to trust him. We briefly stated our case and asked for a little food to help us on our way. We told him where we were intending to go, and he greatly disappointed us by saying that we were on the wrong road. He told us we were now on the road to Havre de Grace, and if we ever struck that place were gone sure, for all through that region, there were lots of poor white people who just laid for such fellows as us and many of them made a regular living out of capturing runaway slaves. It was well we met him, else we might have ran our heads into a trap. You may be sure this news took us right aback and we asked him where we could go with more safety. He volunteered to show us and after going part of the way, said, "You take the road through the woods here straight to the eight mile turnpike, which is just eight miles from Baltimore." We were greatly disappointed at having to retrace our steps and to know that all our last night's tramp was in vain.

We now started on a narrow road that wound its way through the woods and was thickly shaded by trees forming an arch overhead. This was the first time we had traveled by daylight since our escape, and would not have done so now had not the thick woods hidden us from view so that we could quickly get into the thickets if we met anyone. A portion of our way lay through an old corduroy road that finally brought up at a sort of inlet or arm of the river, where there were a couple of vessels loading with wood. We avoided them and walked along until at a break in the woods we suddenly came upon a gang of white men digging iron ore out of the side of a high hill. They saw us and we concluded to put on a bold face and go up to them. What to say came into my mind and I told the boys to keep quiet and let me talk to the fellows. "Keep a stiff upper lip Banks and you, Nicholas, don't look so scared," I said. I was used to ship-carpenters' talk

from meeting the down-easters near Fitzhugh's farm and could talk something like them, so I stepped up to a group of stout fellows and said: "Good morning, gentlemen. Would you please tell me the direction to the eight-mile stone, as I want to go to Baltimore and wish to get back before night."

One of them said, "Where did you come from?"

I replied, "From our vessel down here, which came in last night to get some wood."

Two of them remarked to the others that they had seen some vessels there this morning and then, their suspicions being allayed, they gave us full directions and we went on our way rejoicing. Shortly after we met another group and walked up to them in the same manner and with the same result, for several had noticed the vessels and believed that we were part of the crew. We reached the eight-mile stone about four o'clock in the afternoon and then went into the woods and had a good rest and sleep to make up for our long tramp.

Snow and sleet began to fall as night set in, and to keep ourselves warm we had to trot pretty lively. We took the turnpike again and as the trees gradually closed in around us the darkness was intense. We could almost feel it, so to speak, and we groped blindly on our way. Suddenly we heard a most unearthly howl close behind us, and, looking around, beheld two fiery balls that twinkled like stars and then disappeared. Next we heard the heavy breathing of some animal near us. Another melancholy wail followed and was echoed back by several more from the adjacent thickets.

"Wolves!" said Nicholas. "Those fellows we met warned us of them and said they were quite numerous in some parts of the woods."

We knew that these American wolves were neither very large nor dangerous, and were terrible cowards, but they seemed to gather recruits at every step and came crowding and howling close at our heels, indulging in furious snaps frequently, as if to whet their appetites for a meal. I had made up my mind not to form the adipose tissue and general make-up of any wolf if I

could help it, but matters began to look a little bit dubious. Any one can realize how he would feel if on a dark, stormy night a dozen or more fierce brutes were so near that he could feel their hot breath. I think now, with feelings of horror, of how their vicious jaws came together snappingly as they anticipated how much they would enjoy devouring us. Then we did the worst thing we could have done under the circumstances, by starting to run. One of them immediately sprang at Banks and bit one of his hands. Then we all faced them and kicked hard with our big cowhide boots until they retreated a respectful distance. Afterward when we started again on they came, and spying an old cowshed near by we rushed in and closed the entrance.

Here we staid for several hours, until a faint glimmer of light through the broken rafters told us daylight was upon us, and shortly after the wolves went away. After an hour or two of brisk walking to restore circulation of the blood, we arrived at a little house, and on knocking found no one home but an old woman. On asking her for something to eat she said she had nothing cooked in the house and her husband was not home. She gave us some oatmeal bread but had no meat for us. We were hungry enough to consider the bread a delicacy and it tasted good enough for us to smack our lips over. We then went into the woods again.

About ten o'clock a man came near by to cut his Christmas fuel. He had a team of oxen and a wagon. It was customary to get especially fine wood and to cut greens and decorations for Christmas festivities. The humblest cabins toward the holidays would be beautifully festooned with twigs and rosy tinted leaves. This man was of so light a complexion that I thought he was a white man at first, but on looking closer I saw that he was colored and then I felt safer. I asked him if he could help us to get something to eat and assist us on our way by telling us where to go. He said he could not assist us personally but would put us in the way of being very materially helped. He would send a man who could put us in the right direction at night and in the meantime he would supply our immediate wants by bringing us some food.

He did not himself assist runaways, but in heart and soul was full of sympathy for them and helped them indirectly by putting them on the track of the great underground railway by which many were rescued from slavery, and whose direct dealings with us will be related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

Our new found friend gave us many cheering accounts of successful escapes that had been made around there. He said that slaves had run out of the fields in broad daylight, and as they were so near Pennsylvania they escaped. As he was about to return home with his load, to get some food, we were left to ourselves an hour or so. He had advised us not to run or show any alarm if white men should come suddenly upon us, as it would have a bad look and make them think we were runaways. We should take right to the road where there were lots of colored people going and coming and thus would not be especially selected as objects of suspicion, although we ran our chances and might be questioned. He said we should always be ready with a prompt and reasonable reply.

Our friend was not gone long and brought us all we wanted to eat of corn and flour bread and we made a very hearty meal. He then told us he would send a man by the name of Stephen Whipper, who was paid by northern people to help escaping slaves on their way north, in their grand strike for freedom. He was one of the advanced guard of the underground railroad, and had to conduct all his operations with great secrecy, in order not to be a marked man himself and his noble efforts be made unavailable.

The term underground was used as symbolical of the secret manner in which our friends had to work in order to help us. The objective terminus was at St. Catharines, Ontario, twelve miles from Niagara Falls, where a depot of supplies was estab-

lished and an outfit given to each escaped fugitive, such as an axe, a spade and a decent suit of clothes.

The underground railroad company was originally organized by a band of Quakers in the border states, particularly in Pennsylvania, near the Maryland line. They found out those families on the routes between the slave states and the great north, that were favorably disposed toward the slaves and would help them on their journey. There would be stations on the way from which the poor fleeing ones would be passed from one to the other and after the border was crossed, they would be given into the hands of parties who would have charge of one or more freight cars into which this human freight was carefully locked and covered from view with empty boxes and other material. Then all stations on the road were carefully watched by their friends, and if danger was apprehended, this car would be laid off on the way and taken on later, till finally our destination was reached. You will see by my own experiences the real workings of this noble system, whose aim was to help those who would help themselves, by words of encouragement and, what was more practical, by money and personal effort. In a later chapter I will allude again to this humane outspring of the anti-slavery movement of those days and merely say that such men as William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips and many others were enrolled among its most active members.

This man Whipper was described to us as having a yellow complexion and being of a stern taciturn disposition. He had an indomitable will and was very earnest in the good work he was embarked in. We were to stand by the side of the woods and when he came along the road, which would be about dark, we were to silently follow him. There were certain peculiarities of gait and dress that he would be known by, and we were told to be careful to ask no questions but do as he said, for his judgment was good and he was an able worker in this peculiar field of labor. Our friend then said good-bye and wished us good speed on our journey.

Just as the sun disappeared we beheld a stranger, a tall, lithe,

active man, striding along with a very determined air. There was a look of stern resolution about the closely compressed lips, that bespoke the man of iron will and resolute purpose. The very nature of the humane enterprise he was embarked in called for all those qualities, and in addition there was a certain amount of self-sacrifice about the way he lived, for he took heavy risks and you may say could never call his life his own. If the authorities ever could prove anything against him they would be only too glad to do so, and even to be seen talking to any who were afterwards found out to be refugees would be cause for grave suspicion. As he came by we could see him give us a keen, furtive glance, and a very significant look which we interpreted to mean, "follow me," and silently he led the way with three anxious ones in Indian file closely after him.

There was something very significant in this silent procession, and we began to realize this was the commencement of our feeling the protecting and guiding arm of our warm sympathizers in the free north. We were merely touching the finger tips as yet, but knew the warm grasp would soon be around us and the mysterious agency of the underground railway, so hated by southerners, was beginning to gather us in. Their many outstretched strong arms and helping hands were extended all over the south, and were as an anchor of hope to be grasped by poor, helpless ones who longed to breathe the fresh air of liberty.

After five miles of ground had been covered, Whipper made a gesture for us to halt, and then without a word left us a few minutes and went into a house by the wayside. He soon returned with a man, whom he said briefly would take us away in his wagon and in whose hands he would leave us. Then, without even giving us time to thank him, he turned on his heel and left as mysteriously as he came and that was all we ever saw of him. He was one of the spokes in the wheel, that had commenced to roll us onward to happiness and the land of hope. Now we came to the second spoke that was attached to this axle of humanity, and it soon commenced to revolve.

I said to Banks: "This is all God's doing. He is working for

us and he guides us so we go to the right ones, who will assist and help such as we. It was He directed me to speak to that man cutting his Christmas wood, and now the train is started, the chariot will roll on until British soil is reached and we can snap our fingers at our pursuers and their whole system of human tyranny."

The man in whose hands we found ourselves, had a kindly, benevolent face, and cheered us greatly by saying he had just returned, from taking several fugitive slaves to Columbia. He had them concealed under a load of hay and drove by many who would quickly have stopped him if they had suspected the character of his freight. He told us as it was night we might start for Columbia ourselves, for if he went with us, so shortly after being seen on the way there the day before, he might be stopped and asked some awkward questions and it was very important for his future usefulness, that no one should think he was in active sympathy with fleeing slaves. He gave us full directions of the route we should take, and the way to find out the house of a man living there who would help us along, telling us the street and locality so we could easily find him on our arrival.

Then, after a big meal, we struck the Susquehanna river and for a while got lost from the road he directed us to take and wandered up and down through the woods very anxiously, following the branch of the stream both ways in search of the bridge we were told we should find. All was in vain, however, until at last, coming to a small boat, near where a gang of men had been blasting rock, we unfastened it and put the craft to our own use, the line of *meum* and *tuum* being not very closely drawn by us in cases of necessity. I said, "In with you, boys, and be quick about it. Let us make up for lost time." Then we paddled vigorously across and just as we struck the opposite shore, I cast my eyes both up and down the stream and instantly the scene appeared to my mind's eye as a familiar one I had seen before. I said so to Banks and Nicholas, and they said: "It is impossible, for you were never up this far in your life." "That may all be," I replied, "but I know I've seen it somewhere." Just then my

memory reverted back to a dream I had four years before, in which I had gone over the same episode.

When we got ashore I said, "boys, pull the boat up high and dry, I want to look at her," and when they had done so I looked long and earnestly at it and when I beheld the self same marks and patches that were on the boat of my dream, the sandy beach with the knoll of woods close by and all the surrounding scenery so natural and just as I remembered it, I said solemnly to the others: "Boys, I take this as a token we shall be saved. God be praised; this is our rainbow of hope. No more slavery; no more degradation; 'tis a good omen and we should be full of joy over it. Boys, four years ago I dreamed I came over in that same boat and everything looked just as it does to-day. I remember two companions were with me, though their faces I cannot recall, but it meant you. I remember telling a man, of my dream at the time it occurred and he said, 'that means you will certainly escape some time, if you ever attempt it.'"

The boys were much impressed with this affair and for a long time we talked of wonderful dreams and mysterious, unexplainable phenomena, till our marvelous repertoire was about exhausted.

Then we walked up on the shore, following the tow path along the canal. We walked all that Friday night and next morning crossed the canal and went back in the woods. There were no houses around there and the scenery was desolate in the extreme. As it was blowing a bleak northerly gale, we went under the shelter of some ivory looking cliffs and started a fire. It was bitterly cold, and we huddled together close to the blaze for warmth, and got more comfortable after awhile. I then went to gather some fuel and when looking under the bushes, I found the dead body of a pretty looking white child frozen stiff. She was wrapped up in some sort of shawl and had perhaps wandered from her home and died from exposure alone in the woods. We heard afterwards that there were several white families living a mile or two distant, and the little one probably belonged to some of them. There were no marks of violence on the body,

but the wee face had frozen tears on it as though the child had cried and moaned in those solitudes until death relieved her.

All Saturday night we continued our journey on the tow path, and about midnight crossed the little York bridge, which we had been told entered Pennsylvania. We felt much happier and safer then, for we were now in a free state, where no one could keep slaves, though they could be reclaimed by their owners and brought back south again. But the chances of our capture were greatly lessened, besides the masses of the people were friendly to us and we might expect help on every hand.

Of course the fugitive slave bill was in active operation and we had many foes to guard against yet, but our risks were proportionately less. There were plenty of people, especially among the sect of Quakers, who would gladly warn us of the presence of enemies. The bridge was broken down so no wagons could cross, though pedestrians might, and two men were hard at work so as to have it in shape for travel on the morrow. There was an icy blast freezing up the very marrow in our bones when we crossed the bridge, which was about midnight. We were illy prepared for the colder winter of the north and our teeth chattered a dozen different tunes.

The men working on the bridge had a blacksmith shop right across on the other side and we entered it just as one of them was coming out. They had kept running in and out to warm themselves and had not seen us until we dropped suddenly upon them. I went up to the best natured looking man of the two and said: "Boss, I wish you would give me a chew of tobacco. It's the only thing gives me solid comfort on a night like this." He looked astonished, but handed me his pouch, from which I helped myself most liberally. He then asked us where we were going, and I said to Columbia."

"Are you free men, or do you want to be free, now which is it?"

"Oh, yes, we are free," I replied.

He looked me earnestly in the eye and then said bluntly: "You are not; you are runaways, and might as well own it at

once, for we are your friends, and will help you if you let us, and it won't be the first we have helped either."

I had been deceived by others before, and these being white men, I thought it better to feel my way first, so, pretending to be mad, I started to walk out from them. But the stout man said, "Now don't you go off that way. Listen to me a moment. I am an Englishman, and my chum here is an Irishman; we both have hearts big enough to want to help you or any other set of persecuted men that come along. Now don't fancy you are out of danger, because you are in Pennsylvania. You are liable to be kidnapped any moment; you are too close to the line of danger."

"What is kidnapping?" I asked.

Then he explained to me that though my owner might not be after me in person, or through his agents, yet anyone suspecting us of being runaways, could, in spite of the law, take us bodily, if in sufficient numbers to do so, and carry us over to slave soil again and then advertise and hunt up our master, who would eventually appear on the scene and claim his own.

"Well," I said, "that may all be so, but how do you know we are runaways?"

"Oh, man, cannot I tell at a glance. There is something about your eyes that looks like a hunted deer. You cannot disguise the anxious troubled look in your face. It is a tell tale the tongue can never belie."

"All right, boss; you speak truly," I said. "We are escaping from what we think is worse than death, and if you help us God will reward your kind act and we will never forget it in our hearts."

"Now, do you know you run considerable risk of being kidnapped even when you get to Columbia?"

"Well, but we are directed to a certain man there and he will help us."

"Yes, but who directed you? Don't you fear he may betray a slave. I've often heard of men directed to Columbia parties, who had it all cut and dried before hand and had them sent right

over the line to parties that were waiting to take them back into slavery again."

We said we knew he was all right and we were directed clearly, so we could not miss the Columbia man.

He then went on to say: "Now, friends, I tell you all this for your own good. I'm not piling up difficulties, but stating what has often occurred over and over again and is a matter of history that has come under my own personal observation. I want to impress on you to be very careful whom you trust, for your friends have been very active of late, and so many slaves have been helped to escape, that the enemy have adopted all manner of wiles and expedients to offset them."

"Well," I said, "I'm thankful for your good advice, and will trust you and feel glad to be able to do so, for if ever three poor wandering children needed succor and good cheer, we do, and God has put it in your heart to be kind to us."

"Then you wait here and we will go and get you something to eat. You wont object to that, will you?"

"No, no," we quickly replied in chorus.

"Well, keep a warm fire and try to have a sleep; it will freshen you up a little."

Then they left us, saying they would be back early in the morning with hot coffee, meat and bread and we lay down to dream of it. Early in the morning these two good Samaritans put in an appearance with a big can of coffee and a basket of ham and bread, and it would have done any one good to see the quick tunes our teeth played with it. I wished I had a reservoir system, like a camels, so I could take enough coffee to last me all the week. We felt like new men, and in the words of scripture girded up our loins afresh. They told us we were fifteen miles across the line in Pennsylvania, a fact which greatly pleased us, for we had the idea that the bridge we crossed was the one between Maryland and Pennsylvania, but it seems it was another bridge further up.

Our money was by this time exhausted and we knew if we had a little, we were not so likely to be suspected as we

would if begging our way along as we had done of late. So, as I had a nice silver watch, one I got many years before and had learned to prize from long association, I made up my mind to part with it. Here was a critical time, when a little money would help very materially. I offered it to the men for two dollars and a half. The Englishman said he had no money or he would give it to me, but my Irish friend, with the warm heart characteristic of his race, gave me the amount and then refused to take the watch, telling me to send the money when I was able, and he would give me his address, so that I could do so. I insisted on his taking the watch, however, and he finally consented to keep it as a pledge and would send it to me later on if I wished it. Some years after I redeemed and had it sent me. He advised me to work a short time in Columbia and then with a little money, we would be better able to get on.

We then started after a hearty handshake with each of our friends, and walked along in the day-time, as we did not need to be as careful as before, being in a free state where slavery was not allowed to exist. It made a big difference how we were looked after, and people were not so much on the watch for runaways, where the sentiment of the masses was against slavery.

We had been told we would have to pay twenty-five cents toll to cross over the high bridge which entered Columbia from over the river, but no one asked us for anything and we walked boldly into the city and up a high hill that overlooked one part of it. Here we sat down and nerved ourselves up for the events which so shortly followed.

CHAPTER VI.

I observed, on casting my eyes over the town, a woman standing outside her home, close beside a rain barrel. I said: "Boys, that is a colored woman; let us go and speak to her."

The bridge fronted on a large hotel and standing around it were lots of men of all classes. We walked right by them and some looked very sharply at us, but said nothing. We passed the crowd and went toward the house we had noticed and succeeded in finding it easily. What was our surprise and joy on meeting the woman to find we had come directly to the very house, that was one of the stations of the underground railway, and the woman assured us, we were safe for the time and would be taken care of. She said her husband had to run away to Canada for helping slaves escape and she was staying here and doing what good she could for the cause. Her husband was still in the employ of our friends and was located at St. Catharines, Canada, where he would take charge of those who were fortunate enough to escape, and also help by his past experience those in slavery, by lecturing in Canada and getting the people interested in us, so they would take an active part by giving money and clothing, which was forwarded to where it would do the most good.

It seemed to me as though Providence had clearly directed us here and His guiding hand led us as the star of Bethlehem did the wise men of the east. This saved us from running into any danger we might otherwise have got into through asking questions. The lady gave us food, made a bed for us on the floor, and kept us all night. She said she expected a certain Mr. Rice, one of the agents of the underground road, and he would see to our next move.

Early in the morning I awoke and looking up saw a man sitting near me. He was so white that I nudged Banks and told him I was afraid all was not right, as I heard him say, "You had better wake them up." For a moment I fancied that we were betrayed and the woman had brought our enemies upon us. But I was soon at my ease again, when she called us, and we were introduced to Mr. Rice, who shook hands very cordially and said: "Now, boys, get ready just as soon as you can, and come with me. We have no time to lose and should be off before daylight." After a hasty breakfast we started with him and he took us to

where there were a great many freight cars, and then producing a large key and looking hastily around to see we were not noticed, he opened quickly the slide on a caboose car and had us climb in, then getting in with us he securely bolted the car on the inside, while another man friendly to us locked it outside. He went with the train, and kept a kind of watchful care of this particular car.

Shortly after the train started and I experienced for the first time the new sensation of riding on the cars. Never before had I enjoyed this mode of locomotion, though I had seen trains moving frequently. I climbed up on a box and looked out of a crack in the side of the caboose and as we were going along very quickly on a high embankment, I could not see the ground and we appeared to be flying through the air. I felt rather a queer feeling at first, but soon got accustomed to the motion and we glided along speedily towards the promised land. Just at daybreak we reached Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and as some other fugitives were expected who would go in our car, we laid over until next morning, when a freight train came along and took us on with some others that had joined our little band.

At last we reached Philadelphia, and Mr. Rice took us through the crowded streets up to the underground railroad office and introduced us to the chief man, Mr. William Sill. He was very kind, indeed, and took an especial interest in our case, listening attentively while we told him the main incidents of our lives. While standing in the quarters provided for us I met Box Brown, the slave who escaped from Richmond by being boxed up and shipped as glass to be handled with care. He came clear through to Philadelphia and when the box was opened, he was barely alive and too weak to stand up.

We listened to lots of very interesting stories about narrow escapes, some of which I remember. There was a man living in York, Pennsylvania, named William Goodridge, whose sons, by the way, are photographers in the city of East Saginaw, Michigan, to-day. He ran a freight line by the name of Goodridge's York & Philadelphia Line and was especially

active in helping slaves escape. He had a cellar under his house where many a poor runaway was temporarily stowed and then shipped on one of his cars to safer quarters. Once a woman was shipped to him in a box from Baltimore, and the parties who had charge of the box were watched so closely, that when they drove off with their live freight from the York depot, they were followed and would have been overtaken only they drove hastily into the back yard of a big hotel on the way, whose inner court was walled up, and closed the gates behind them. Then the box was opened like lightning and the woman ran clear through the hotel and was hurried off by a back street to Goodridge's cellar, from which she finally was shipped to Canada which she reached safely.

Another man, shipped from the same place in a fish box to the care of a fish-dealer in York, who also was friendly to the cause, came near getting killed by being leaned against the side of the car head downwards, and so long was he in that position, that when he reached York they had great work to revive him and for many days he suffered from the effects of the rush of blood to the head that he then experienced.

One time when P. McCandless, the conductor of Goodridge's freight line, had a lot of refugees in one of his cars, he had occasion to leave them a moment to step into the freight office. While there, a colored man, wishing to betray those under McCandless' care, stepped into the car and told them they were on the wrong train and pointed out another on a side track, that they should take. Most of them got out and into the other one. When McCandless came in he was wild with rage at the Judas that had got the poor people on the train just starting for Baltimore, and he rushed frantically after them, succeeding in getting all back in time. He heard at the next station that telegrams had been sent out to all stations they would stop at, to go through his cars. So he got empty boxes and piled them up on the men and women in his charge and had them lie flat on the bottom of the car. Then telling them to stay quiet and say nothing, he locked the car and left the train. When it stopped at Lancaster

men peered through the bars in every car and hunted high and low for McCandless to come and unlock the doors, but he was not to be found, so they contented themselves with looking in at the bales of goods, and finding nothing alive the search was given up, and the precious freight went through all right, McCandless rejoining them from another train, later on.

These and many other wonderful but true stories I heard, and I thanked God for raising up such good friends for the colored man.

A great many benevolent ladies and gentleman came and called on us and listened with great interest to our story. They gave us good, warm clothing, and also some money to defray our expenses when we should reach Canada. After a very pleasant sojourn of several days, during which we recruited ourselves from the hardships we had endured, Mr. Sill took us himself to the train and saw us off for New York City, where a man named Gibbs was to meet us. He came right in our car at the depot and re shipped us on to Syracuse, where we were to be met by a Mr. Logan. We made the run there all right, reaching that city at about twelve o'clock the next night. I asked the station master if he could tell me where Mr. Logan lived. He said, "Logan, the colored man?" I said "yes." "Well, I do know him," he went on, "he is your brother, isn't he? Your features are something alike."

I told him we were all brothers and he bade us wait and he would get his train off and then show us the way. The snow was falling thick and fast and it was bitterly cold. I thought what a contrast to the sunny climate we had left, but with all its rigors I felt it was a freer and purer air than the one we had been used to.

The station master returning, we followed him to where Logan lived, which was close by. He was not at home, but we were very hospitably treated by his wife and stayed there three days. We were then sent in the care of a conductor to the Suspension Bridge, Logan having returned and personally attending to us.

I heard him tell the conductor to be sure and put us safely on the Canada side.

They had three men on the train whose duty it was to especially look out for danger and to take every care and precaution for our safety, as we were coming to the dividing line, where so many slaves had been captured. Just when the cup of liberty was raised to their lips, it would often be dashed away and they would have to quaff to the dregs the bitter dose of despair, and a return to slavery would speedily follow. Telegrams were sent ahead to special men appointed to look out and see if there were any parties on the lookout for us or any other runaway slaves.

After reaching Rochester, the conductor came up to us and said: "When you hear me cry out 'Suspension Bridge,' you must come right up to me."

We paid due attention and when after a time he thrust his head through the door and shouted out, "Suspension Bridge," clear and distinctly, it fairly electrified us, as we had been growing more and more excited every moment and we knew the final crisis was upon us. Our eyes just sparkled with flashes of hope and we jumped up as spry as kittens. On going through a door, we found a buss backed up and ready to receive us. We got in and the conductor said, with a very significant look to the driver, "go quickly" and then the horses sprang forward like lightning, as though they had entered for a race. The buss rumbled and rocked, swaying to and fro and seeming to our excited fancy to be fairly endued with life and sympathy for the three anxious ones it carried. The team had to slow up on the bridge and walk. It seemed a very solemn march to us, but at last we were over on the other side of that raging torrent, the majestic Niagara. Many times have I seen the grand cataract with its foam and roar since then, but never to my dying day will I forget the thunder of its fall or the wild swirl of waters that swept beneath us.

The driver now came around and opened the door, saying, "boys, you are safe in Canada."

I jumped out, followed by Banks and Nicholas, and we shouted

and hallooed just like crazy folks, "We're free; we're free; bless the Lord for it; bless the Lord for it; blessings on his holy name." I then threw up my hat in the air and we all threw our arms around each other and cried for very joy, that seemed to well right up within us and find vent in this manner. We danced around like children and our actions excited the attention of people around us, who, when they found the cause of our extravagant actions, did not blame or make fun of them but cheered loudly, and I joined in, clapping my hands over our new-found happiness. Oh this grand, glorious liberty. You have only to be a slave once to appreciate freedom.

It was a curious coincidence that the day we entered Canada as free men was Christmas, and what a glorious Christmas present we had; the highest boon a slave could have asked for—his liberty.

We went on shortly after to St. Catharines, reaching there at twelve o'clock noon, and the Christmas dinner we indulged in then almost tickles my palate's memory now. I think each of us weighed a good many more pounds after it and we felt benevolent towards all mankind.

Hiram Wilson was the name of the man we were consigned to in St. Catharines, and he supplied us with clothing and boots, an axe and other things that completed our outfit, so we could set right to work and earn our own living, and that ended our connection with the underground railroad so far as we were concerned.

CHAPTER VII.

I have often thought it was fortunate we were able to escape without having any man's blood on our hands. Frequently Banks had said to me, it was a pity we were not armed with revolvers, for then we could fight our way out. I was glad afterwards we did not, for we might have used them with deadly

effect. Several times our pursuers were almost on us and if any of them had been killed, the whole country would have been up in arms against us. It was all very well for us to be set up as targets for a leaden hail, but the rule didn't work both ways. If we had shot the old man that had fired at us, or killed any of those fellows that chased us on the railroad, our lives would most surely have been the forfeit. The newspapers and telegraph's aid would have been invoked and such a hue and cry raised that it would have been next to impossible to escape. The law was very strictly enforced with regard to colored people carrying fire arms or concealed weapons of any kind.

I remember when only twelve years old when working as cart boy on the Aquia Creek Railroad, seeing a case, where a man named John Coates received five-hundred lashes on the bare back because a revolver was found on him and he refused to tell who he bought it from. He was as white to all appearances as any man, but having colored blood in his veins, he was a slave and the laws on the subject of any parties selling deadly weapons to slaves, or for slaves to buy them were very severe. This Coates bought his revolver from a white man, and it was discovered some time after when his master was punishing him for some trifling offense. The man he bought it of would be sent to the penitentiary for a long term of years, or suffer some other way equally as bad. We were not permitted to buy even a jack-knife without special permission from our master. Poor Coates was whipped until he became insensible, and his persecutors said there was no use continuing to whip him, for he would die before he would betray the man that sold it to him.

Why, these slave owners were so fearful of an insurrection among the slaves, that if three or four colored men gathered together on a Sunday and entered into any earnest conversation, they were sentenced to receive thirty-nine lashes on Monday morning, laid on their bare backs with a vigor that would make them be very brief in their future conversations with each other.

Of course many masters were very lax in enforcing such a law, but they had the power to do so if they wished. I had a dose

myself and don't forget it, either. I remember one time, when a boy of thirteen, I went to feed some cattle one afternoon, and by some mishap happened to set fire to a straw stack, and for this, young as I was, I had one-hundred lashes with hickory switches. They were counted by Joe on the farm and all the other slaves were called to witness my sufferings. It was customary to have these whipping scenes witnessed by the other slaves, especially if the punishment was severe. They thought it would exert a salutary influence on them, and warn them of a like fate if they did not behave themselves. Not only that, but they would force us slaves to act as each others executioners.

They always had us whipped over the bare skin, for our clothing would otherwise be torn. My master has often had me take the clothing off the female slaves, and then he would stand behind me with his whip, and if I did not strike them hard enough, he would strike me until I did. I knew if I did not he would select some one that would, and I would be unmercifully lashed myself, so bad, perhaps, as to lay me up, and I had no alternative but to obey. It makes my blood boil now when I think of it, and it certainly was well for our masters that we did not have revolvers concealed on our persons, for many of them would have been made to bite the dust. Memories of these horrible cruelties will persist in coming up and cannot be stifled.

Nicholas told me the circumstances which led to his finally running away, and they further go to show the iniquity of the system. He worked on a farm adjoining the one I was on and the circumstances I will briefly relate here. His master had been treating him so badly that he ran away. George Orrick and a man named Jarrett ran off at the same time with him. They crossed the Potomac river into Maryland, then went as far as Piscataqua and there were captured by a gang of slave hunters, who had heard of their escape and the direction they took. Their masters were sent for and each slave was taken to his respective plantation.

Jarrett's master whipped him terribly, Orrick was sold off the farm, and Nicholas was taken and tied up to a syc-

more tree by the hands, until his toes barely touched the ground, his legs were tied together and a heavy rail thrust between them, and my two cousins, Julius and Turner, were made to sit on each end of the rail, straining the joints of his arms and legs until you could hear them crack. Then his master whipped him from the soles of his feet up to the back of his neck. His clothing had been torn off him and his body was soon in a horrible condition. Every stroke of the whip was emphasized with an oath, and the master kept saying: "This country is too hot for you, is it? You wanted to get to a colder climate up north, did you? Well, I'll send you to a country far hotter than this."

He lashed poor Nicholas until his arm hung nerveless at his side through sheer exhaustion, and then seeing he was pretty far gone, he loosened his hands so that he fell with his bare quivering flesh on the sharp prickly points of the wheat stubbles and there he told them to let him lie, saying with an oath to Turner and Julius, "get some spirits of turpentine, vinegar, salt and pepper and rub him down." He waited till they did this and then left with instructions to let him stay there and take his chances of life or death.

Strictly speaking, Nicholas was not his slave but belonged to his wife. She was a gentle loveable lady, very kindly disposed and the reverse of her brutal husband, who was always a man of ungovernable passions, which he would gratify at any cost and repent of afterwards when too late. His wife hearing of Nicholas' condition, sent for my cousins and had them bring him in, then she saw that his wounds were dressed in cotton batting and sweet oil, after which she had him put in a comfortable bed and there nursed back to life. She did not let her husband know of her kind action, and was helped by the fact that he was called away early the next morning to go to Richmond and so didn't have any time to make enquiries about the man he so brutally beat.

Nicholas, having a good constitution, got over it and soon was working around the farm as usual. He was considered a good

worker, and being a miller by trade was often employed in that capacity in his master's grist mill. Matters went smoothly until one day his boss got angry with him for something and struck him over the head with a stick, knocking him insensible and nearly killing him. He had a violent fever in consequence and lay hovering between life and death for some time, but finally rallied and then made up his mind to try and escape again. He was watched so closely that he had no chance to get away unobserved, but he had fully determined to do so the first chance he got.

The time came. It was on the last Saturday in November, when he happened to be working close to a long ditch covered with vines, that ran clear through into the woods. He crawled in suddenly and only a moment after heard his master's voice calling him. He lay perfectly still at the bottom of the ditch, while his master spured his horse backward and forward along the side, jumping over it now and then, but failing to find him. He jumped his horse right over where Nicholas lay motionless one time, and he thought all was up. When the shouts of his master were in the distance he would crawl on like a snake through the weeds and rank undergrowth until he at last reached the woods and then, while his master was away getting help to capture him, he made a bold dash through the thickets, and they never saw him again.

He knew he would be killed if captured, as his master had sworn to do so, and he was a man who kept his word. It was shortly after, that Nicholas met us while walking through the woods, and after that we kept together till we reached the land of liberty. I can vouch for Nicholas having had the experiences related, for I worked only six miles from the farm he was on, and my cousins whom I've already mentioned were present when he suffered most, and they told me every detail.

Some of the slaves were very white and you could hardly tell but what they were of the same blood as their white owners, and yet, if anything, they were often treated more cruelly than the full-blooded negroes. They were generally kept for home serv-

ants and had perhaps more refinement. They were used to many little luxuries we knew nothing about, so in proportion they were more sensitive to harsh treatment than we were. Yet often for little petty faults they were severely punished, and were ever at the mercy and caprice of their mistress' every whim, and worse still at their master's, the evils of which would fill a volume.

Some of these white slaves were handsome and fine appearing and with as lady-like manners as their mistress, and the fact that negro blood was in their veins would never be discovered by an observer. I know of cases where masters had to go long distances to bring evidence, either of the mother or near relatives of slaves they wished to sell, to prove they had negro blood in their veins. The purchaser would not buy until he was perfectly convinced beyond all doubt that the party was a legal slave, with no flaw in the title or other impediment.

I remember a beautiful child, as white and delicate a featured boy as I ever saw, whose mother had to be sent for from a long distance to prove he was her child, in order that he might be sold. Very often motherless white children had been stolen and sold as slaves, and there was a very heavy punishment inflicted on those convicted of such a crime. Northern people when visiting the south would often want to purchase the freedom of these house servants whose clear complexion rivaled their own in beauty and who, by long association with educated and refined people, acquired something of their air of good breeding and were very different from the other slaves. Most southerners hated to sell their slaves to northern people to be freed by them. They thought it had a bad effect on the other slaves, who would sigh in vain for that freedom which would be pictured to their eager minds in such a glowing and vivid manner.

Right in master's home, he had a house servant, a very pretty girl, they called Amanda, and the Massachusetts brothers, who first instilled hopes of freedom in my breast and whom I have mentioned in a previous chapter, wished to purchase her and then take her up north where she would be put

in charge of their wives, who would see she was properly educated. These brothers occasionally dined with master and noticed Amanda's gentle manners and lady-like face. They were impressed with her bright intelligence and told Fitzhugh she was too good to be a slave, and they would like to buy her. She was perfectly white and no one would suspect she was a slave.

Fitzhugh was greatly prejudiced against these men, and said he would order the rascally Yankees away if they ever came around again, but he somehow feared them nevertheless, for they were shrewd business men and knew well what they were about. He was not going to allow them around his negro quarters anyway, he said, for he knew they were venturesome fellows and sympathized with his slaves. So these men when they wanted to talk to us slaves had to elude master's vigilance and see us at night, when they would give us true ideas of the value of liberty and show how it was the natural inheritance of every man.

This girl they asked Fitzhugh to sell them, just longed for freedom, for they had spoken to her about the subject and painted vividly the advantage she would have. But Fitzhugh put them off with some evasive reply and the next time they came, he told them he had sold her to another man a long way off and they would never see her again. As they were on the point of starting north they never saw her again. They were greatly disappointed, for her quiet, unobtrusive ways and clear, bright mind had completely won their hearts, and they wished to save her, if possible, from the fate many beautiful slaves had to undergo.

All this time where was this hopeless being whose fault was that she was above her station, so her master said, and of which he was bound to cure her. She was degraded, scourged and taken from the home in which she had acted so long as waiting-maid, and after her cruel master had covered her luxuriant hair with mud and dirt he forced her to go to work with the field hands, in the heat of the broiling sun, and when she was hardly able to stand up with fatigue and weakness. In the evening he called all his slaves together and formed them in a circle around his victim, whom he had tied across a large barrel, hav-

ing previously divested her of all of her clothing, just as she was when she came into the world, and then he had her whipped severely. He kept saying: "I'll teach you to run after the blamed Yankees," and then turning to his slaves he said: "If any of you do the same I'll give you a dose too."

Picture to yourselves, my white friends, a poor girl as white as yourselves, sensitive in mind and frail in body, exposed to the gibes and jeers of the rough, uncouth crowd around her, for you must bear in mind that these house-servants were not loved greatly by the field hands. The latter were jealous of them; thought they gave themselves airs and more so if they were nearly white, as this one was. They were weak enough to gratify all their pretty malice at each other's expense.

There were many evils of this kind that slavery engendered, and in a moral aspect alone it has much to answer for; being the primeval cause of the worst passions and most brutal instincts. When such an event as I have just pictured can have occurred within thirty years, we may well feel surprised. This poor girl afterwards met the fate that befell so many others like her. She was crushed beneath the iron heel that killed the soul and crushed all those higher emotions of the human heart, that elevate mankind and make our race only a little lower than the angels.

There was a young man named George McKinny on the farm and he was so white that our master sold him to be taken further south, for fear the friendly whites would assist him to escape, and he knew if he once got away he could go anywhere unquestioned and would soon be in safety. Most of the lighter complexioned slaves were got as far south as possible, as there was less chance of their escape then. The masters as I've said before were more severe with them, because they feared they would give themselves airs and perhaps be more likely to attempt to escape.

Very trivial offenses were punished out of all proportion to the crime. Once I took a peck of wheat for Christmas use for George Orrick and myself, and being discovered I was tied to a large oak tree, Orrick on one side and myself on the other, and the master

tied a knot in the lash and laid it on both of us backwards and forwards, striking each of us alternately. The knot sank deep into my flesh and I was laid up for three weeks before I could walk, and to-day I have a gash still on me eight inches in length, as a memento of what I paid for my share of that wheat.

I was often hired out from the Washington estate, before I went to work for Fitzhugh, and sometimes had excellent masters for awhile and then others just the reverse, who would treat us worse than so many cattle and flourish the whip over us all day. One man I worked for had three men run away from him. His place was at Port Conway, and they got as far as Bluff Point and there were captured. The overseer was sent after them and tied each one by the hands to the back of his buggy and then with a team of spirited horses drove as fast as he could the whole way home.

When the farm was reached they were terribly lame and their feet were bleeding from every pore, while one had his wrist dislocated. In addition they were tied and whipped so severely, that the largest man, a stout, fat fellow, died from the injuries received. The bull whip which was used cut clear through into what we called caul, or the fat of his neck, and he died in the string, hanging by his hands. His master, who was a very superstitious man and did not intend to kill him, was so alarmed that he dissected the body and taking out the heart carried it across the Rappahannock river and there buried it, so as to keep the spirit from haunting him, though I greatly fear that it would be like Banquo's ghost and would not down. The people around there found out the whole affair of this man's death and it cost the man that killed him a great deal of money to evade the clutches of the law, for public sentiment, though pretty lax in many things, was not dead to such an awful crime as this. My wife, Eliza Mercer, belonged to this farm and later on my owner, that leased me out sometimes, bought her, and that's where I got married.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is often claimed that the African race are noted for petty pilfering. I will not argue the subject but simply say that the allowance of food we slaves had was quite inadequate to our needs, and it engendered a habit of laying our hands on what ever food was around loose. A chicken or hog would, I must own, frequently disappear from the haunts that had known it and would be seen among its associates no more. A dark mystery hung over its fate and not a trace was left to tell the sad tale; at least it would be sad to us if there was.

Many a time a fat porker would trot down by the river side with a rope tied to his leg and the rite of baptism, by immersion, be performed. He would be held under the water until, owing to an absence of the life-giving element, he would become unconscious, and while in that condition, we would cut his throat from ear to ear, and the current of his life's blood would mingle with the mud of the river. By this process the porker would pass to that bourne from whence no pigs ever return and all without a murmur. If we had used the ordinary methods he would have murmured a good deal, and we would probably have been discovered before the death rattle had struck him.

Let me briefly state our food allowance so that you may judge how we lived. Some may think it plenty, but if they had been in our situation, working as hard as we did, I think they would have speedily changed their mind. A full grown man was allowed one and a half pecks of cornmeal a week; a half grown boy, a gallon and from that down to a quart. The meat allowed was two and a half pounds a week and graded less according to age and size, while some did not receive any. If you should raise a hog yourself, you would be entitled to one half of it and your master the other. We also had a half dozen herrings a week, and if we got any more, it was because we knew where they were kept and helped ourselves when night's dark mantle was charitably thrown around us.

I have known my family allowance to give out two days before

the rations were distributed and then I had to go out on a still hunt to feed the babies and wife. We would generally after that have a plump chicken for Sunday dinner, over which grace was pronounced with great unction. My wife was a dining room waiter and would bring crumbs and scraps from what was left after the rest were through. Many a night towards the end of the week, we having been perhaps a little improvident and eaten up everything, I would have to sally out as a self-appointed commissary department in quest of forage, having to sacrifice many sleeping hours to keep my wife and wee ones from feeling the pangs of hunger.

I never thought I was breaking the eighth Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," for I believed in the text that I heard in the Scripture, "Where ye labor there shall ye reap," and I thought I had labored enough to entitle me to reap a good deal. So pork was not an unknown quantity in my humble cabin, and I would reap anything eatable I could lay my hands on when I felt hungry.

When slaves were sent to Georgia they would go in gangs of five-hundred or more, all handcuffed, two by two, and a long chain running down the middle of the line uniting them as one living snake-shaped mass. None could hope to escape. Women and men, all together, were treated alike. No delicacy was observed, and at night all would lie down together by the roadside and sleep. If any lagged by the way, there were plenty of rough overseers who would lay the lash on unsparingly, and the poor fainting victims would often lie bleeding on the road and die from sheer exhaustion. True, there were wagons for the sick and for children, but this did not prevent many from giving up and dying by the wayside, where quickly a hole was dug and they were dumped in like dogs.

It was claimed by some that most of our troubles were brought on through disobedience to our masters, and that if we behaved ourselves we would have been treated well and lived both pleasantly and happily. I reply it is not in human nature to do so. The Jews grew restive under the oppressive yoke of the Egyptians,

and finally the great Creator interfered in their behalf and Pharaoh and his host were destroyed. Did not Moses smite the Egyptian, for oppressing a Jew? No, it is impossible to go through life subject to the will of another and not grow rebellious under it.

We now and then made some money out of fishing. We would after nightfall quietly take possession of master's boat and muffling the oars with rags would row out to his small seines, haul them in and fill the bags we brought with us and then return as quietly as we came. This was done in the wee small hours of the stilly night, when we would be less liable to be discovered, and we would have watches posted at different points to warn us if any one approached, for if discovered, as we were sometimes, smarting backs would be the penalty. These fish would be disposed of in the towns near us, and regular fish dealers would come down and buy them from one of our number, who would have charge and secretly hide our prizes for that purpose, and then after the sale our joint stock company would hold a meeting and declare a dividend.

You may talk of the big sturgeons caught up north, but they are not a circumstance in comparison with those I helped to capture in old Virginia. Some of them were as thick through the body as a horse. When we had speared one of that kind, we would let him run out the rope and then pull steadily in until we finally tired him out and landed him on the bank. We would start early in the morning, our master and some of his friends being with us, and take about two-hundred feet of rope, with an harpoon at the end. We would quietly float down with the tide until we came to the fish, when out would fly the harpoon, burying itself in his side. After worrying him a while we would get him near enough to us to lasso his tail with another rope, and then by gradual degrees we would work him in shore and finally land him out of his element. This was nothing more or less than miniature whale fishing without the danger and without the oil.

There are a great many white minstrel troupes traveling through our northern states, claiming to give exact delineations of negro

character and plantation sketches and scenes, but they do not portray the real quintessence of ole Virginny, as I have seen it. It is like a counterfeit bill to a genuine one. I have many times seen both and ought to know. I've taken part myself over and over again in our southern dances and music, and danced the hoe down as well as the best of them.

Some of our dancers were as active as any of their white imitators, and they attained great skill through constant practice. Their agility was truly wonderful, and you would think that they were made of India rubber, so quickly did they bounce off the ground, when their feet touched it. I, being a pretty solid two hundred and sixty pounder, would do all the heavy business and leave the hand-springs and fancy jiggling to others of lighter mould.

When our masters had company staying with them, they would often collect all their slaves for a general jubilee frolic. The banjo-pickers would take a prominent position and would play all their fancy jigs and liveliest tunes for the jolly dance. Little boys and girls, old men and women, as well as the maidens and youths, would take part in a grand run around, all-off-to-Georgia style, and twenty-five cents was given to the best dancer of a regular break down. It would shake up the risibles of the most solemn individual to see the double shuffle as we did it in those old slave days, and I laugh now to myself when I think of the perfectly reckless abandon with which all would throw themselves into the sport.

This was the sunshine of slave life, and for a time we would drive dull care away and think not of its darker and gloomier shadows. I've seen some colored women grasp their dresses on each side, holding them so you could see their feet take every step known to the art, and do it as well as the most talented professional, all done easily and gracefully and with no apparent effort. There seemed to be a certain inborn grace and ease of movement possessed by many young colored girls, that was owing a good deal perhaps to their being perfectly

healthy and their clothing so adapted that every motion was untrammelled and free.

We generally made our own banjos and fiddles, and I had a fiddle that was manufactured out of a gourd, with horse hair strings and a bow made out of the same material. If you put plenty of rosin on the strings, it would compare very favorably with an ordinary violin and make excellent music. When we made a banjo we would first of all catch what we called a ground hog, known in the north as a woodchuck. After tanning his hide, it would be stretched over a piece of timber fashioned like a cheese box, and you couldn't tell the difference in sound between that homely affair and a handsome store bought one.

Shortly before Christmas I had managed to accumulate over a hundred muskrat skins and taking them to Hamstead I sold them for enough to buy myself a fine violin of good manufacture, and with this I would sit on my door step on the warm summer evenings and play myself perfectly happy. I would play at every spare moment, often commencing Saturday evening and continuing until nine o'clock Sunday morning, while the crowd would keep tripping merrily the whole time, one group giving way to another as the first got exhausted and wanted a breathing spell. They would dance with their bare feet on the clay floor of my cabin and you could hear the perfect time they kept by the noise of the double shuffle. The floor was made of clay, originally put down in a damp state, and which after hardening, could be swept as clean as a board floor.

Music was something, we colored people had in our souls. It may not have been very fine, but the heart was there and it expressed all our best emotions, pervading our being and making the nerves tingle with pleasure while the very veins pulsated in sympathy. Thank the Lord for instilling in our souls this taste for the harmonious and for making us naturally light-hearted and cheerful under so many afflictions.

Our homes consisted of one large room partitioned off by curtains that surrounded the high bedsteads in use at that time. Hundreds of the slaves would make bedsteads for themselves by

driving down a piece of stake; nailing it to the wall, and then rigging up a sort of affair that answered the purpose by fixing boards across. As the weather was comparatively mild our clothing was not so heavy as otherwise would have been necessary.

I've often thought that if I had not experienced and seen all the good and bad features of slavery, I never could believe one-half its evils, as told by others. The white man took advantage from the first to abuse his power and strive to keep us in ignorance and the cruellest subjection. I have been placed in positions to know what I am talking about, and can vouch for every statement made. I remember one case of cruelty committed by a man who ranked as high as general, and whose position in society was unquestioned. This so-called gentleman, though the name is a misnomer, for he was far from being a *gentle*-man, purchased a female slave so white you could not tell her from the Saxon race. Her complexion was clear and she was brilliantly beautiful. Because she did not do as he wished, he tied her, hand and foot, and ill-treated her in the most cowardly and brutal manner. Finally, as she was still defiant and high spirited, he sold her to go further south to Georgia and she died on the march, broken in body and crushed in spirit.

Another case that came under my own personal observation was that where a young mother of only seventeen years of age was sold to another and distant plantation. She had to leave her little boy, who was just beginning to walk, and who cried for many a long day after her. Nineteen years later this same boy, grown to vigorous manhood and very tall and powerfully built, was sold to the very same farm his mother was on. Neither knew the other, all trace being lost long ago. Working near each other the two became attached and finally got married, of course in the negro fashion. Some time after the mother happening to notice a scar on his head, asked him how he got it and he said he had been told, that when he was a baby he fell out of his mother's arms into the fire and got badly burned; that was when he was on Judge Campbell's estate. "Why," screamed the poor

woman, "you are my own son!" and she fainted away. The boy had been sold from place to place and by a strange coincident brought up at last on this very farm his mother worked. She being a well preserved good looking woman of thirty-six he fell in love with her, and this were the final result. When their true relations to each other were understood his master sold him away to a distant farm and they never met again.

Episodes like this were of frequent occurrence, and even Enoch Arden has been re-enacted, only with a different denouement, for if, perchance, Enoch came back years after being separate from his family and living on some other estate, he would never interfere with Mrs. Enoch's second choice, but would forthwith provide himself with another spouse, if he had not already done so. My wife Eliza Mercer was working on the same plantation where this affair happened, and says, to avoid confusion, the owner thought it better to sell the boy. I worked near by and frequently saw them both.

There is another very peculiar case that I must not omit to mention, which occurred in the family of Mat. Finley, who kept a prison pen in Fredericksburg and who was particularly hard on those in his charge, herding them together like cattle and ill-treating them in many ways. His wife was the very reverse of her husband, being of a sweet, humane disposition. She abhorred the slave trade and all its harrowing features.

One day there were brought into her presence by accident, two colored men who had attempted to escape and been recaptured. These men were handcuffed together by the wrists, but the handcuffs being too small for them, the flesh was torn and swelled in a terrible manner. Such was the shock to this gentle lady that shortly after when she gave birth to twins, the little ones were united to each other at the wrist by a strong fleshy ligament looking like a miniature handcuff. Finley was so shocked at it himself that he gave up the business, selling out to Ayler, the man that afterwards bought Banks and me. Finley then returned to a small farm he possessed, and ever after was much kinder to the slaves he owned, and never sold any more. He said

a warning of that kind was not to be disregarded. Ayler who succeeded him generally kept from four hundred to five hundred slaves on hand, all the season, and yet in spite of his large business he died a poor man, miserable, neglected and despised.

Our hours for work were in the fall season from daylight up to nine or ten o'clock at night, the grain gathering time keeping us extra busy. After that it was not so bad and we had more leisure time to ourselves. All children over ten years of age were obliged to work in the field with the rest, to carry water if not strong enough for heavier labor. We did not go home for either breakfast or dinner, but had it brought to us. Sometimes we would be able to get near the end of the row where the trees were and have the benefit of the shade. Otherwise we were exposed to the broiling southern sun the whole day, and its fierce, fiery rays would often prostrate the feebler ones and by night we would feel tired in body and mournful in spirit. We had always to finish the row we commenced before we could have our meal, and it was not a pleasant sight to be working hard yourself while someone else was eating close by.

CHAPTER IX.

There is a strong religious element in the minds and hearts of the colored race, and they reverence all that is of a sacred nature. Our camp meetings were affairs of great moment to us, and were conducted on a large scale. Shiloh was a great place for them to be held in, and immense numbers would congregate from all the surrounding plantations. General religious rejoicing would be the order of the day, and hundreds of white people would be present and take great interest in our proceedings.

The patrols, or country police, were not allowed to bother us during camp meeting time, and as we were not molested our zeal was proportionately great. These big gatherings would take

place Sunday—week-days we would be too busy—but we would hold weekly prayer meetings at the different farms we worked at. Many times the patrols would catch us as we were going, and after whipping us we would be sent back. These patrols corresponded to our city police, only their beats were longer and they were especially empowered to catch slaves who were out at the hours interdicted by law.

Our funerals were conducted in rather a peculiar manner, for if any one died, relatives were seldom allowed, except the nearest, to accompany the body to the grave. But the deceased was quietly disposed of in the burial ground set apart for colored people, their graves marked, and then on the different Sundays in the months of July and August, a sort of wholesale funeral service was held over all who had died in the few months previous. The services of three or four colored preachers were secured, and they would be taken around to each burying ground and there hold especial services over each grave, reciting the many virtues of the deceased, and not always omitting the vices, or glossing them over as in our modern funeral sermons.

These obsequies had at least the merit of being economical, and if relatives of the dear ones gone before would be satisfied, there would be more cash to divide among the widows and orphans, less brass bands, and useless funeral expenses. But it is not to be, and the other style will continue unto the end.

The worthy ministers who performed the services were pretty actively employed in the obituary line of business, at this time, but they were fully equal to the occasion and had great command of language. Many of them could not read or write, but they would express themselves in their own peculiar phraseology, and, as they burned with a fiery zeal, it made up for defects of education. Taking into consideration the uncultured state of their hearers, these worthy men gave good satisfaction. Having great powers of imagery and felicity of expression, they would often astonish their educated white hearers, by the fluent, eloquent language used, and the many quaint expressions and original

interpretations of Scripture made by these earnest souls often showed a vein of thought of a high order.

We had our regular Wednesday night prayer meetings at each other's houses, but they were held at the discretion of our master, and if the edict went forth that we could have none, we were obliged to hold them by stealth, like the Covenanters of old in Scotland. If we had a local minister he would preside, otherwise we would manage among ourselves. There would seldom be silence in our meetings, waiting for each other to speak, as I am told there is often in a white man's prayer meeting. We were always ready, that is the religious ones, to testify, and felt much better for doing so. Some of the ministers were not allowed to preach if the master was arbitrary or down on them for something, as was frequently the case.

One of my best friends and counselors, the Rev. Moses Myers, was sold from the plantation he was on, to some Georgia man, only because his master thought he preached too much, and, as he said, had "got religion on the brain." He was a man about sixty-five years of age at the time I speak of, and if he did have religion on his brain, he certainly had it in his heart also, for a more loveable, cheery old gentleman I never met. To be suddenly wrenched from all his friends and family, where the tenderest associations clustered, was more than he could bear, and being ill-treated also by his new owner, he attempted to escape back again. He reached the old farm where all the happiest moments of his life had been spent, and then, being followed, was captured and taken back, severely whipped and set to work. This time he found no opportunity to escape, being so closely watched, until a year had gone by, when he again made the attempt. As they used hounds to track him he was once more caught and brought to Georgia.

This time his owner said, emphasizing it with a blood curdling oath: "Now, Myers, look here; if you get away again and manage to reach your old master's house, we will give you free papers. But remember, if you are captured before reaching there, you die, as sure as you are a living man now, and you

may depend on it we will see to it that you don't reach there. You are no use to me as it is, unless you stay, work quietly, and don't attempt to run off. You see you set a bad example to the rest and it costs a mint of money to chase you every time, arousing the whole country and having such a hulla-baloo all over a worn-out old slave. Now you take my advise and don't try it again. I'll let you off this time, and see you behave yourself or your carcass will pay for it."

Myers only replied, "Well, master, God will take care of both you and me."

Some six months later he escaped again and lived for three weeks in the swamps and woods on oak leaves and bamboo briars. His master with a posse of mounted men and a pack of blood hounds left Georgia close on his trail, but Myers had doubled in his tracks and by wading through the brooks that the forest abounded in he was able to mislead them, so that the whole gang passed right by him and went straight to his old home. Finding he had not yet arrived there, they scoured the woods in every direction and posted guards at all points of approach to his old master's home. They also sent parties back to Georgia to see if the old man had not thought better of it and returned, or else perhaps died on the road.

But all was in vain. No Myers was to be found, until one dark windy night this poor old man crawled on his hands and knees through the long grass, trembling and fearful that every moment would be his last, for he knew if captured he would be literally tortured to death by being whipped into insensibility. At last he reached his former master's home, and finding a window open that led into the parlor he climbed in and was suddenly confronted by his old master himself, who said: "Well, you are back again. I must say you are a pretty determined old rascal and deserve your freedom."

"Yes, boss, I've come back again," said Myers. "You know what the agreement was."

"Oh, yes, I was witness to it, but I want you to remember I'll

not have any of your religious nonsense about my place, and you had better understand that at first."

The Georgia man was hunted up and was dreadfully incensed, when he found that his slave had escaped him and reached the house of refuge. Though a cruel man, yet he was a man of his word, and kept it. He made papers out, by which Myers was to stay with his old master for the balance of his days, nominally a free man. He was only to do chores around the farm to get his living, and no heavy work was to be put upon him. If ever a man earned his freedom it was Myers, but he got it only at the caprice of his former owner, whom it pleased to keep a whim. When the Georgia man and his overseers were about leaving, the old preacher fell down on his knees before them and said: "You pray to that God who delivered me out of bondage, like he did Daniel out of the lion's den, and who made me escape free from injury. I hope, master, you will do better, and on the great rising morn we will all meet in a better world than this.

They bade him farewell, and for a moment seemed touched by his talk and looked on in silence as the tears coursed their way down his furrowed cheeks.

Many years after, when I took a trip down south to see my kindred and friends, I met Myers, and he told me word for word what I have just related. He was then a hale cheery old man over eighty years of age, still standing up for the Great Master, in whose cause he had suffered so much. Turner had given him about an acre of ground, and he had, with the help of others, got it well under cultivation. It supplied nearly all his simple wants, and he was living a contented, happy old age. The trees he had planted years before had grown up and his little home was surrounded with them as well as beautiful flowers. He pointed out to me a peculiar looking bush that was perfectly scarlet in color and very handsome, loaded with red berries of a species I had never seen before. "I call it the burning bush," he said. "It is red as blood as you see, and sometimes I fancy the spirit of God speaks to me out of that very bush and tells me what he wills me to do." I staid with Myers

three days and then when I said farewell, he replied: "You will never see me any more on earth; let us try and meet above."

I have often seen Africans not long out who could not speak English. They were chiefly Zulus, and were tatooed across the chest with stars. After a time they would begin to pick up some of our language, and then they would want us to be friendly and social with them. I remember them using these words, "You dem all come over and visit we dem all and we uns will go over and see you uns." I heard of some that believed in voodooism and fetishism, but never saw any of their religious rites performed, though I believe that further south they practiced many superstitious observances.

Let me say a few words about how a real old-fashioned barbecue was managed down south, I've so often assisted at them myself that I ought to know. In the first place the ox is cooked over a large flat iron pan curved up at the sides to keep the gravy from spilling. Several iron spears were run through the carcass so that all would be equally cooked, it being put on a spindle with a crank to it and turned around and around until we had him baked thoroughly. Then, while one man turned the crank, the other would pour the seasoning grease over the ox, so it would go through and through him, and he would be nice and juicy and as toothsome as the best fried beefsteak with butter. The slaves would do the whole work, and entered enthusiastically into the spirit of the affair, which had the usual accompaniments of brass bands and speeches.

I attended one barbecue held at Bowling Green, near Fredericksburg, where they had five-hundred waiters alone, and the guests were so numerous they were not even then all supplied. Some eight oxen were roasted, and it was the biggest affair of the kind I ever was at.

Opossums were a favorite dish with us, and our masters liked them, too, for when they heard we had one they would pay us twenty-five cents for a quarter, and get us to cook it besides. I've cooked woodchucks, also, and they made a very enjoyable dish. I think the seasoning used down south is better and

richer than what we have up here. We generally caught opossums with a dead fall trap, baiting it with salt fish. Often we went around at night, with the dogs and would catch them up persimmon trees which they had climbed to eat the fruit. When they saw us coming they would hook their tail on the limb and hang down as if they were dead. If the limb is low enough so you can reach them, all you have to do is to grab their tail and walk off with your prize. They will not bite, and you run no danger for they don't move, unless you set them down in a dark place, when they will quickly scamper off like a rat, and that is what we call playing possum.

Raccoons don't make as good meat as opossums, though we frequently hunted them, but opossums lay over the world, done up with sweet potatoes and the proper seasoning. Coon meat is stringy, and we didn't care much for it. We would, in catching them, generally go up to a tree and shake them down amongst the dogs to have a picnic with. But it takes a good dog to kill a coon. It will fall on its back and scratch and bite to the last. No common dog, but a blood-hound has got the knack of catching him right by his breast to master him.

Talking about blood-hounds reminds me of a favorite dog of my masters named Danger. It was a most appropriate cognomen, he being built up from the ground and looking more like a big yearling calf in point of size, while his mouth had generally a free and open expression, displaying ivory tusks like so many daggers. This gentle individual I've seen master set on an obstreperous ox and the savage brute without so much as a growl, would quickly leap at the animal's nose and fetch him over flat on his back, where he would bellow with rage and fright. A lasso could not have done the business neater or with such dispatch. I've seen the same dog, when master left his horse at the stile once and it ran away, at his bidding outrun the horse, catch him by the bridle and fetch him back. These dogs will rarely attack anything or anybody unless ordered by their master, but if ever they get hold, their grip is as strong and steadfast as a bulldog, and they will die sooner than let go.

They can outmatch a bulldog any time in a fight, and shake one as a cat would a rat. The scent instinct in a blood-hound is something extraordinary.

I've known them to start on the trail of several runaway slaves ten days after they had left, follow them up and capture them. When an escaping slave heard the hounds following him and saw there was no chance of escape he would try and climb the nearest tree, while the dogs would surround it and keep him there, barking and howling until their master came up. They were specially trained for hunting human beings, and their power of scent was wonderful.

I've mentioned in a previous chapter what we used, to throw them off our track and confound them by being put on the wrong scent. Spruce pine and strong onions are the best articles, and will confuse the nose of the most experienced blood-hound. These dogs are very fleet and grow to a great size, like the largest types you have seen traveling with the "Uncle Tom Cabin" troupes, but are a little stockier and heavier set.

Often when they came upon a man that battled with them, they would tear him to pieces as a pack of wolves would. But if the victim is quiet and stays perfectly still they will simply circle around him and bark and howl till their masters appear on the scene. They seldom fight among themselves, being more humane in that respect than many men. Their masters had them fed regularly every day on rare meat, and took particularly good care of them. A pup was worth twenty-five or thirty dollars, while a full-grown dog would easily fetch sixty or seventy dollars. One of the two dogs I killed, mention of which has been previously made, my master would not sell for one-hundred dollars. It was his finely trained Danger whom I assisted out of this world by first slicing off his fore legs and then braining him. If I had not done so my life would have been the penalty, and I never hesitated about doing it or felt a twinge of conscience in consequence.

The whip used by the slave-drivers was a cruel instrument, and in their hands could inflict torture that would make the poor

sufferer writhe in agony. It was about twelve feet in length, eight feet being the lash, which had for the last two feet what we called a cracker, made of plaited horsehair and cotton, mixed. This would sink right into the flesh at every stroke, and in a very short time the flesh would resemble raw beef. The whip was about as thick at the handle as a man's wrist and tapered off gradually to a fine point. There was a spike projecting from this handle, and sometimes the infuriated slave-whipper would use it with terrible effect, mangling and even killing the victim of his brutality. The main body of the whip consisted of strips of leather plaited together like an English dog-leash. I am glad this relic of a barbarous past is now about obsolete, and only regarded as a curiosity. To us in those old days it had a dread significance, and even now gives me the nightmare to think of.

I've sometimes heard colored people say they were better off in slavery than freedom. You can generally put down those who utter such sentiments as low and shiftless, and too lazy to earn even their own living; at least that is my experience of them. I remember once in St. Catherines, when I was suffering with my wounded arm and unable to work, I got poor and ragged for a time and lost flesh. A gentleman who was visiting in the city and who had lived in the south said to me: "Why, Williams, I should think you would look back with regret to the days when you had a master to provide for your every want; when you were well-fed, well-clothed and looked fat and sleek. Here you are, cold and hungry, and with an anxious look on your face, as though you did not know where your next meal was to come from. Down south you took no thought for the morrow, your every want was anticipated. Now don't you think you have made a fool of yourself all for a mere sentiment?"

I replied, "All right, boss; you may think so. The situation is vacant yet; you may go and fill it if you like and if you think it's such a paradise. No, sir; you cannot beat into my head that slavery under its most alluring garb is equal to freedom. Although I have had a hard struggle for daily bread this feeling of independence more than compensates for the difference. In the

south I had to agree with all my master said, no matter what my convictions were. Thank God, the air I breathe now is clear and free, as the Heavenly Father intended it should be. Some men are almost too lazy to draw the breath of life, and would like some one else to do it for them."

CHAPTER X.

The first work I did in Canada was for Mr. Rykert, of St. Catharines, then for James Keith, of the same place. I chopped in the woods for them until my thumb commenced to pain me, and, in fact, my whole arm, from the effect of a shot that was in the fleshy ball of my thumb, a souvenir I received from Mullen when shot by him at the mouth of the cave. This right arm bothered me so I did not know what to do and I was unable to chop or work with it. I got completely out of money and did not have enough to pay a doctor to perform the operation of cutting the shot out, but, as the Lord would have it, who should come to St. Catharines but my Syracuse friend, Elder Logan, the agent for the underground road in that city, and who had assisted me on my way to Canada. I told him how I could hardly work and he told me to go over with him to Syracuse and he would take me to a skilful surgeon who would cut the thumb for me. He said he thought it was safe and I would not be stopped going there, as now that some time had elapsed since my escape they would not be so likely to be on the lookout.

Some of the white people in the city, hearing that Logan wished me to go with him to the states, made a great fuss about it and said he meant to kidnap me. Nothing would make them believe to the contrary, and they finally made it so hot for him that he left rather hastily, giving me enough money to follow him if I wished. As I had perfect confidence in him I did so, first telling the gentlemen interested in me that I was going to New London, so that they would not suspect my destination.

I reached Syracuse safely and was very kindly received by Logan, who took me to Dr. Hoyt, who performed the operation very skillfully. I asked Logan what he thought I had best do for a living until my wound healed and he said he would go around with me to the schools of the city and I could narrate to some of the teachers parts of my history without giving my name and he would guarantee the facts to be true. I followed his advice and raised some fourteen dollars that way. He then sent me with a letter of introduction to the Rev. James Gregg, pastor of a large Presbyterian church in People Grove, New York state. Mr. Gregg received me very cordially, and as I got there on Saturday he announced at a large funeral he presided at, that the pulpit in his church would be occupied the next day by an escaped slave, who would relate some of his experiences and history. He said that, having been lately from the south, I would be able to give them a realistic picture of slavery's horrors.

The next morning for the first time in my life I occupied a pulpit, and you can imagine my feelings. Logan told me what was expected and I was full of my subject, so, looking over the sea of heads before me, I gave them a plain recital of the chief incidents in my life. I addressed them as "fellow citizens" and said in opening my address that I was born without their advantages of education and they could easily see I was rough and uncultured. I wished to talk a little about the usages of slavery, and if any of the terms I used were not understood by them would they please recollect them and ask me after I was through and I would explain.

After I got through speaking two old gentlemen got up, and each of them after asking me some questions, stated that all I said was true as gospel, as they had seen it themselves. One of them had been an overseer down there and the other one was a carpenter, born and bred in the south and had owned slaves himself, but he had seen the curse of it and left the country. A collection was taken up of thirty dollars and the ladies of the church moved that I should speak again at night, as also did two-thirds of the men. At night when I got

to the church I could scarcely get to the pulpit for the vast crowd of men, women, boys and girls, all anxious to hear me. There was barely standing room, even the aisles and the pulpit itself being crowded, which went to show the sentiment of the free north against slavery. Many women shed tears that night as I spoke of the harrowing incidents that came under my observation. I said, addressing the ladies: "How would you like for the African race to be in power and send men that would handcuff your husband right in your house or field, and take him away to Georgia or some place where you never would set eyes on him more or hear aught of him, or take your babe from your breast and sell it by the pound, as I've seen children sold?" Then, turning to the men, I said: "How would you like to see another man and myself enter your home and tear your wife away, handcuffing her, and perhaps taking your dear little ones also and bear them off from your sight forever? Put it to yourselves, take it home and remember that is the way we were treated and are treated today in another section of this, your country, and of which you so proudly sing 'Sweet land of liberty.'"

I fairly forgot myself in my subject, and my great earnestness impressed my auditors. I was affected to tears myself by some of the word pictures I drew of sorrowful scenes I had witnessed, and hundreds of my audience bowed their heads and wept in sympathy with my sad recitals. I used language I ordinarily never was capable of, and my spirit was full of my subject. I shall never forget that night. It was such an unexpected position for me, a poor, unlettered fugitive, to be placed in, and one I never could have thought I would be able to fill. But I felt the power of the great wrongs done to my race and it stirred me up as I never had been before.

I had to shake hands with everybody as they filed by me for that purpose, and as they grasped my hand and looked me long and sympathetically in the eye I had a practical evidence of their good will by the numerous dollars and half dollars left with me, which amounted in all to seventy dollars. I was pleased, indeed, for one hundred dollars in one day was a pretty large donation,

and I knew I could get on now until my arm got well. I was afraid to stay longer in the state, as my history had got noised around and I was running a great risk, though my new-made friends assured me they would stand by and protect me from my persecutors if they appeared. I stopped at Rochester before going back and interviewed the great Fred. Douglas, and from there I went back to St. Catharines, after having a most eventful journey.

As soon as my hand got so I could work I made arrangements to work for some gentlemen who were at that time wood contractors for the Great Western railway of Canada. This was about March 1st, 1855, and I worked for them until the spring of 1867, living most of that time in Ingersoll, Ont. I then came to Pontiac, Mich., and staid there a year, when I moved to East Saginaw, Mich., on April 28th, 1868, going to work for the same gentleman who was a member of the firm that employed me in Canada when in the wood contract business. This gentleman always took a kindly interest in me and my fortune, and to-day he is one of the leading bankers in this city. I had only fifty cents when I struck this town, but have made a good many of them since then, and from 1869 up to the present time I have been employed in general work on my own account. I have prospered greatly and now own a comfortable home and other property which I rent.

I know you will feel interested in learning what became of my two companions who escaped from slavery with me. Let me briefly relate their history since then. First we will take up Banks. He worked with me until the year 1861, when, the war breaking out between the north and south, he went over to New York state and enlisted in a regiment there, but later on he was put in a South Carolina colored regiment and fought all through the war, chiefly in Tennessee, and was wounded once in the hip. He got some one to write for him to me when he was in the army, and the gist of his letter was that he was well and was down south, giving the rebels hail Columbia. They had given it to him once, he said, and now he was returning the compliment.

On his honorable discharge in 1865 he went to Detroit, where I met him, and he told me many interesting incidents of the war. I saw him last at the state fair held in Detroit a few years ago, and he said he owned a little farm near Wyandotte, this state, and was a contented man, filling the humble niche that God had put him in and doing his best to live a good life. He says he never regrets the day we landed in Canada nor his having fought for the stars and stripes, and is glad he did his share towards keeping them still proudly waving.

Christopher Nicholas worked with me three years in Canada, then, hearing of the big inducements to emigrants to British Honduras, he was so carried away by the El Dorado it was painted as being that he left against my earnest protest. I never saw or heard from him until the winter of 1872, when I was visiting Washington, and there, by the merest accident, met him in the street. We were both so surprised and pleased we could hardly speak at first, but at last found our tongues and exchanged experiences.

He said he was grievously disappointed in Honduras, that the men who employed the new emigrants treated them almost as though they were slaves, and after he had been there several years working hard all the time until he owned a little land all he could sell it for was \$50, and with this, hearing that the American war was over and colored folks were free, he sailed for New Orleans, arriving there without a cent, it taking all his money to pay his passage. He then walked from New Orleans to King George county, Virginia, taking six weeks to do it. He finally got there, and, meeting his wife, whom he had to leave when he fled to Canada many years before, they started again in a home, and now he and his family were living in Washington and doing fairly. I then bade him good-bye and have not since heard of him, but suppose he has left this world by now, as he was considerably advanced in years.

CHAPTER XI.

Eighteen summers had gone by and I had greatly prospered in my northern home, having accumulated quite a little property. I now made up my mind to revisit the scenes of my earlier days and take a trip to the sunny south. When I spoke to some of my white friends about it they were quite interested, and shortly before I started I was made the recipient of many presents, which in the aggregate rigged me out in most presentable style, and as I intended to pass through Washington on my way I could call and pay my respects to President Grant. One friend gave me a handsome plug hat, another a pair of kid gloves, while a prominent clothier, noted for his generosity, made me a present of an elegant suit of broadcloth. This, with a fine pair of boots and an immaculate tie, completed my outfit, and as I fixed up on the morning of my departure I could not help bowing to myself in the glass and saying, "How are you, Mr. Williams; do you know yourself?" I felt I would rather astonish my old master if I came across him, and as I had a wife and children and many relatives living in Virginia I longed to see them. So on a bright morning in December I bought a ticket for Washington and left East Saginaw for a brief sojourn among my kith and kin. I felt quite elated going back the way I did, and could not help contrasting my position now and then. In those days I was a poor, ragged, runaway slave, chased by hounds and human wolves, all alike thirsting for my blood. Now I was going back a gentleman, to be a living witness to the friends and relatives I had left in the south, of what freedom and living in what we called "God's country" had done for me.

I left home on Monday, December 16th, 1872, and reached Baltimore Tuesday night. I took a walk through the city early in the morning to see how it looked, for it was night when I passed through before on my way north. As I sauntered along some of the white folks looked scornfully at me, and I heard some say, "That's a Yankee nigger. Just look at the style he puts on. Look at his clothes." I didn't mind, though, for I

thought I had the best of the laugh and they were my clothes and better than those of most of the white folks I met. I started soon after for Washington and got there at noon, and enjoyed the afternoon walking around looking at the government buildings and other interesting features of the city.

I was not noticed so much here, as there were lots of northern gentlemen with servants dressed like me and I was only one among many. I met Nicholas in the street as I was quietly walking along, and in the short sketch of his wanderings I've alluded to what transpired. I had thought of pushing on to King George county, Virginia, where my slave days had been spent, but as I had heard some time before about the Ku-Klux-Klan and their deviltries I made up my mind to ask President Grant's advice as to whether it would be safe for me to return to the scene of my former troubles. I knew General Grant would protect us colored people if he could, and he would know anyway if I could venture safely or not.

So the next morning I walked up to the door of the presidential mansion and asked the man at the entrance if I could call and pay my respects to the President, as I was all the way from Michigan and would greatly like to see him. I was referred to General Dent, and he gave me permission to call the next morning about nine o'clock, when he said the President would be glad to see me. I was punctual to my appointment and appeared at the White House with a happy light in my eyes as I thought of the pending interview. I had first to pass by the colored sentry who stood at the door in the hall. He then passed me on to General Dent, who was up at the head of the stairs. I had a written document signed by two prominent East Saginaw bankers stating that I was Mr. Isaac D. Williams, of East Saginaw, Mich.; that I was much thought of in the city of my adoption, and what I said might be relied on. That was the tenor of the paper, and served me as a credential if any emergency might arise that I should need it. I was then ushered by General Dent into a large-sized room, where there were several persons standing, talking and laughing. I heard some

finely-dressed ladies say, "There is one of nature's noblemen," and though I did not know at the time exactly what was meant I believe it was intended as a compliment. I was told this was the President's reception apartment. I knew him at once by the pictures I had seen of him. He was plainly and unpretendingly dressed in a suit of dark gray, and I stepped right up to him and said: "Mr. President, is this you?"

He replied, "Yes; I'm General Grant."

Then I gave him my credentials, which he glanced over and remarked they were worthy of my presence.

I then said, "I am the Isaac D. Williams that that paper mentions. I was born in King George county, Virginia, and raised there in slavery. I escaped eighteen years ago and have lived most of the time in East Saginaw, where I've prospered and done well. Now I am returning to visit some of my old friends and relatives in King George county if I can find them alive, and what I want to ask your advice about, Mr. President, is whether I would be perfectly safe in going down there now, for if there is any danger I need not risk my life."

The general replied, "No, Mr. Williams, there is no danger now. The danger element is subdued and goes quietly about its business. I think you could travel without the slightest fear throughout that whole region and not have trouble of any kind as long as you behaved yourself. There may be some who would look scornfully and haughtily at you, as they dislike the colored people of the north, but don't pay any attention or notice them and pass right along."

We then talked about my old state of Michigan, and he told me he had been in Saginaw himself once, when it was a very small place many years ago, before the war. All he could remember of it was the swamps and woods. I said it was very different now and the population was about eighteen thousand. He asked what kind of a business place it was and I told him salt and lumber were the staple articles manufactured. I had posted myself as to the amount of lumber cut in a day by some of the largest mills in the Saginaw valley, such as McGraw's and

one or two others; also the amount of salt a good well would produce daily. He seemed quite interested, in the lumber business especially, and made a memorandum of some of the figures I gave him.

He then asked me what business I followed, and as at that time I was acting as janitor of several banks I said I was connected with some monied institutions, was doing well, and now owned a nice little property, on which I was going to build. He said he was pleased to hear it, and then asked me questions about surplus and dividends of the Saginaw banks I was connected with, on which subject I was not posted and could not give the information desired, but I put the figures as high as possible, for I was bound to keep up the credit of the city. However, I felt I was treading on dangerous ground and tried to drop the subject, for I saw by the way the general lifted his eyebrows that I must have got those figures a wee bit too high. He must have thought I was a stockholder instead of janitor of the banks, and also that however well posted I was on the lumber cut I was a little off on the financial questions he had asked me.

He said he was glad to hear I had got a home, and that he considered it the duty of every man to try and have one as soon as he could. He further said, in answer to a question of mine as to the condition of the colored people of Virginia that they were so numerous they had a pretty hard time of it to make ends meet, but their wants were simple and they didn't seem to grow thin under it. But it would be many a long day before they would be able to own as much property as I did, or be as prosperous.

In the city of Washington they were better than in the country, building up nice churches, and it was only lately the city council had passed an ordinance to have a large number of new streets opened and also for a lot of street-cleaning to be done, and this would give work to a good many. About nine hundred would get employment from this source alone. He said: "You

see we have colored people here to guard the house, and all through the city many act as guardians of the peace."

After a little further chat he said good-bye, and told me to be sure and call on my return before going home, as he would be pleased to meet me again.

I noticed the furniture was all substantial and rich. There were no flimsy articles lying around, but the walls were decorated with fine paintings and everything was in keeping and harmony with the rest. There were several in the room during my interview, and they seemed rather impatient for their turn to come, but, I thought as long as the President didn't care I need not, and so we both let them wait till we were through. He complimented me by giving me his undivided attention during our talk and laughed and smiled in a manner that put me perfectly at my ease. He was very natural and unaffected in his conversation, and had a quiet, unassuming dignity, peculiarly his own. He always spoke to the point, and most of his questions were with regard to Michigan matters. On leaving I met a great many people thronging the stairway to the reception. I was glad to have been early enough to have such a long pleasant talk with one who had been such a prime means of freeing the colored people of the south.

That same day I took the train for Alexandria and there I called on my old master's sister, who was a resident of that city. She received me very kindly, and in answer to my enquiries after my folks and friends said she could give me no definite information, but believed they were most of them down in King George county still, and I would be sure to run across some of them who could inform me about the rest. I then went to Fredericksburg, sixty miles distant, and on walking through the old city I could not help thinking of when last I was there, imprisoned and penned up with others like so many cattle. I saw the place where we had such a narrow escape from the hounds near the city, and a shudder thrilled me when memory recalled our perilous flight and the horrible wolfish gang that were so closely after us. Step by step I went over the old ground there and said,

"Thank God those old days have gone never to return, and I am now and ever will be a free man."

The city presented a very desolate appearance, having been burned during the war, and at this time had not been rebuilt. The numerous high blackened chimneys, standing all alone with no houses around them, told a sad story of this unnatural war's devastating effects. They were gloomy monuments of a sad past, and even the woods surrounding the city showed the blackened and charred trunks of many an old monarch of the forest, as an emblem of the ravages made in its innermost recesses.

I tried to see Geo. Ayler, the man who bought me from Fitzhugh and from whose prison pen I escaped, but he had been dead just three months. I called on a man named John Knox, who in my slave days had known and been very kind to me. He was a very wealthy man, owning property all over Fredericksburg, a grist mill at Falmouth and a fine plantation, besides a large livery stable in the city. He was noted in the old days for his kindness to his slaves, and to many a one had he given free papers after allowing him to earn his freedom, and placing the valuation down at a very low figure. He never whipped his slaves or allowed others to do so, when he leased them out, as he would sometimes, and he was greatly beloved in all that region by the colored people. His white neighbors did not always like his style of dealing with his slaves, but they knew he was a determined man, with plenty of money to back him up, and they dared not interfere.

It was to this man, who knew everybody, that I went to make enquiries after my folks, and I was very pleased at the warm manner in which he received me. I told him all my adventures, and he said he knew I had had a hard time getting away and he was afraid once I would be captured.

He was very glad the slave days were over, and though, like the rest, he had lost heavily by the war, yet he was still on his feet and the land was his; they couldn't carry that off anyway. His old hands worked willingly for him and he paid them the best wages he could afford. We had a long talk about different

things, more especially of the effects of the war. He said it had worked a great change in everything, but no more than what he had expected, for in the natural course of things that was what it entailed. He had looked for the great struggle years before it came, and he knew if the northern people got in a President, there would be trouble. "You know, Ike, that though I've lived always right in the heart of the slave country, yet I was kind to my slaves and set many of them free, and they don't forget it now. I always gave them a chance to pay for themselves and all those I sent north and have heard from have done well, while those down here, whom I have set free, are doing fairly, too, according to the work they can get to do, and the scarcity of ready money in the country."

He furthermore said the south had made a great mistake in holding out so long. He himself was too old to go to the war and fight, and he believed if the south had taken pay for their slaves in the first place all would have been well and the state rights question would not have come up and caused such a fearful struggle for supremacy. "I was in a pretty hard position; between two fires, as it were, for I took no part on either side, though at heart a Unionist. But one had to be very careful what he said in those days, for our southern brothers were very severe to southern men of Union proclivities. Neither my mill nor my house were burnt, though they had many narrow escapes from both sides. When the northern forces came along through here I went to the officers in command and told them frankly my real sentiments, incidentally telling them to help themselves to anything they saw. I had a choice lot of wines and liquors in my cellar and I filled up the canteens of all the men wearing epaulettes with imported liquors, such as Scotch mist and Irish dew. They then gave me a special guard to protect my property from the main army."

He talked for some time of the war experiences of that section of the country, and then when I wanted to go he would not hear of it, but kept me to dinner with his family. He was as hale and hearty an old man as I ever saw. The very purity of

his life made him so, and the inward happiness of his soul shone out of his eyes. Kind to all, beloved by all, growing old gracefully, and well filling that niche in life that Providence had placed him in. If all masters had been like him slavery would not have been the evil thing it was and one could be almost reconciled to it. But men like Knox were as an oasis in the desert, and to be owned by such a man was the wish of many a poor slave suffering from tyrannical taskmasters. Many a slave has he bought when he had no earthly need of him, and only did so to keep him from being sold to some undknown slave dealer who might be a bad master. He would seek out kindly-hearted men to sell his slaves to when he had more than he had need for, and the good deeds he did will live to be green in the memory of many, long after he is gone to join the great silent majority.

I met a cousin of mine on Knox's plantation, and he was glad to see me and know I was doing well. He told me where I could find many of my people, and then after a hearty handshake I left on the stage to visit the old Fitzhugh plantation.

CHAPTER XII.

On the way there we passed by the old King George county jail, where I had been confined after I was shot, and from which Banks and I had escaped eighteen years before. It seemed to frown on me as we passed it. I told the driver some of the circumstances that occurred in the old shattered place. I pointed out the very window I escaped from, and breathed a silent prayer of thankfulness that God had delivered me to the happiness I now enjoyed. Everything looked desolate around there, and I was glad when the old ruin was left out of sight behind us.

The next day was New Year, and I thought it was a curious coincidence that the day I reached liberty in Canada was Christmas and the day I reached my old master's farm eighteen years

later was New Year, both important epochs in my life. There had been a light fall of snow, but the genial sun soon cleared it off. I felt a new joy in my heart as I rode over the ground, noting old familiar landmarks and then faces that I could almost remember. There was a certain exhilaration in the atmosphere that invigorated my being, and I drew long breaths of it, saying, "Once this was a slave's breath; now it is a freeman's." While occupied with these reflections I reached Edgehill, a small place near Fitzhugh's farm. Here I got out, and, looking around me, met two white people I knew and who lived there at the time of my escape. They remembered me at once when I brought myself up to their minds, and then I met some colored people who knew me in those old days and was told by them where my folks could be found. When I first addressed them they were civilly polite, and, seeing I was a stranger, asked where I was from, but when I said I had lived there myself years ago they grew more interested, and as several other colored people were now by I had quite a little crowd around me. I no sooner mentioned my name than several shouted out: "Why, I knew you!" then "Don't you remember me, Ike? I'm so and so." Then they spoke of the hard time I had getting away and made me tell the story of my escape. I had a very interested audience and we enjoyed a pleasant talk, several of them telling me to make their houses my home while in Edgehill. I spent the day very delightfully, meeting many old friends, all of whom gave me a very hearty welcome.

From Edgehill I went to the residence of the Rev. John Fleming, a colored Baptist preacher, who had always been especially friendly toward me when I was a slave. It was he who the year after my escape, when my mother died, wrote me a letter telling me of the fact, and knowing that letters mailed by colored people were closely scrutinized, he walked sixty miles to the city of Washington to mail the letter to me, for fear the southerners would get hold of it. It was well known that no colored man could either mail or receive letters without his master's permission. I had a hearty welcome from Mr. Fleming and

staid with him several days. I also met a white man, Beck Johnson by name, who told me he had been thrown into King George county jail and kept there eighteen months on the mere suspicion that he had aided in my escape, and then he was only finally released for lack of evidence. This man had been supposed to have helped slaves escape before, and he was seen near the jail the night we got out, but as it happened he was perfectly innocent and suffered unjustly.

I have already alluded to my visit to the old preacher, Myers, in a previous chapter, and will merely add that it was the most thoroughly enjoyable of any I had. I now visited the small town of Conant, near Edgehill, and going into a store there I got to talking with some men inside. While thus engaged a young man drove up and came in. He looked hard at me and then asked the proprietor who I was. He told him he believed I was a traveler from the north from what I had said and that my name was Williams. The young man then came up to me and said,

"Are you not Uncle Drewey's Isaac?"

I told him I was not, and drawing myself up proudly I added, "But I have been. Now I am Mr. Isaac D. Williams, of Michigan, and own myself."

He shook hands with me cordially and said he was the nephew of my old master, Drewey B. Fitzhugh, and remembered me well. He was only twelve years old when I escaped, and he knew that there was a great hue and cry raised after me, and he was glad I got away. He invited me to have a glass of wine with him, which I did, and then we had quite a long talk together. He said his Uncle Drewey was away in Washington and knew he would feel sorry not to see me. He spoke of the war, and said it was thought no Yankees could come up the Potomac river as far as Barge Hole unless piloted by some negro who was used to the intricacies of all the crooks and turns. So when they did come he heard that Isaac Williams was the man that guided them.

Young Fitzhugh went on to say that the southern forces

were driven back to Port Conway and from there to Richmond. He told me two of my sons got shot in Libby prison with several other colored men, because they uttered Union sentiments. I was well-treated by this gentleman while in Conant, and he made my stay there very agreeable. I visited the different farms near there and met my wife and several of my children. One of them, the youngest, was now a good-looking girl of eighteen; when I left her she was only six months old. As my wife had long since thought I was dead or forever separated from her she had married again, but I received a warm welcome from her nevertheless, and re-enacted Enoch Arden's style for her benefit. I quietly accepted the situation, for I was married again myself.

I asked what wages were paid to laborers around there and found that all they got was six or eight dollars a month and board themselves, but as most of them had small cabins and a little parcel of land they lived simple enough to get on somehow. I visited all the old places that were so familiar to me years ago, and noticed that they all showed more or less the finger-marks of time and the desolating effects of the late war.

I was amused at the ideas some of the more ignorant had of the people of the northern states. They were told by the southerners during the war times that the Yankees would send them all to Cuba and make their condition far worse than it ever had been, and also that the real, genuine Yankee had only one eye, set in the middle of his forehead, and a horn on the top of his head. The poor dupes believed it, many of them, and one fellow told me that he knew the Yankees would take colored men and drive them in swampy, low marshes and there cover them with wild geese feathers. With such ridiculous yarns as these were they stuffed, and as they knew nothing to the contrary it was implicitly swallowed and digested. They had been told that those they had seen from the north were only southern people after all, that had gone north and returned, but the real Yankees were blood-thirsty and savage.

The time had now come for me to return home. I had spent

some six weeks away, and began to long for northern scenes and northern faces again. After making a round of visits to all my old and many of my new friends, receiving many a hearty "God bless you" and warm good-bye shakes of the hand I departed, and within a few hours was whirling along on a fast express. I was very glad I took the trip. It was an experience I'll never regret and gave me many new ideas of people and things in general. I felt particularly pleased with my interview with President Grant, and I would have called on him on my return only he was not in Washington at the time I passed through.

I reached East Saginaw hale and hearty, and a day or two after might have been seen pursuing my daily avocations the same as usual.

Now, my friend, as I draw to a close these memories of mine, let me say that we as a nation should rejoice that this blot of slavery is removed from our escutcheon, that now our country is truly the "home of the brave and the land of the free," and if these pages give you a clearer insight to the real condition of the slaves of those old days, to their manners, customs, religion, music, and all those things that went to make up their lives, I will not have sent out this history in vain.

Sunshine and Shadow it truly has been, an alloy of joy as well as sorrow, but the fleecy snow-white clouds with silver lining, and many sunny, bright colors were but too often replaced by dark shadows of sorrow that poured forth a rain of grief, of broken hearts, of loved ones separated, and all the minor evils that attended the master evil—slavery. In my humble way I have had a very checkered experience, for I had every advantage of thoroughly understanding both the best and the worst features of slavery.

I was leased out from the Washington estate to various parties at different times, sometimes being blessed with a good, kind master, and again quite the reverse. I had thus an opportunity of seeing more of life than if always on one plantation, and all the various episodes in the career of others that I have interwoven with mine I can vouch for as being in the main correct,

and can back my facts up by good white testimony as well. It has often been said that truth is stranger than fiction, and some of the events narrated I would hardly credit if they were not so thoroughly attested by reliable witnesses. Then, too, the gentlemen who gave me my credentials to President Grant know that these events are the same as I first told them when entering their employ, and I have always told the same unvarying tale, only without entering so minutely into particulars as I have done here.

In conclusion I will say God bless the noble Lincoln, Sumner, Phillips, Garrison and all those earnest, whole-souled men who did so much to help our race. We are a grateful people, and deep down in the most sacred recesses of our hearts is implanted the key-note that we looked for for years, that one precious word without which we would sooner die, and for which many nations have fought, many a noble life been sacrificed, that talismanic word—LIBERTY.

THE END.

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